Little Owls Kindergarten
Manual of Policies and Procedures

LITTLE OWLS
Kindergarten

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1. Mission and Vision

1.1 Mission Statement

Little Owls Kindergarten is an independent early years setting for children aged three to five years. The kindergarten is committed to providing a safe, nurturing and home-like environment where every child feels valued, respected, protected and included.

Our mission is to support each child's holistic development through meaningful play, positive relationships, creativity, exploration and active participation. The kindergarten promotes independence, confidence, curiosity, communication, empathy and a strong sense of belonging within an inclusive and multicultural learning community.

Little Owls Kindergarten works within A National Curriculum Framework for All (2012), the Learning Outcomes Framework for the Early Years Cycle, including the Toolkit for the Early Years Cycle (0–7 years): Using a Learning Outcomes Approach – Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment, and the Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years): National Policy Framework for Malta and Gozo (2021). The five Early Years Learning Outcomes guide pedagogy, planning and assessment while allowing learning to remain holistic, integrated and responsive to children's interests, experiences and development.

Internationally, the kindergarten draws selectively on Nordic early childhood traditions that foreground the intrinsic value of play, children's participation, independence, democratic relationships, well-being, care for shared places and sustainability. Children are viewed as capable, curious and active participants whose ideas influence daily routines, projects and the use of learning spaces.

These principles are expressed across indoor, outdoor and community-based experiences. Children engage regularly with the natural world through the on-site outdoor area, planting and plant care, weather and seasonal observation, natural and reclaimed materials, and planned educational visits to suitable local community spaces.

The environment also draws on Reggio Emilia principles, particularly the importance of beauty, documentation, creativity and the learning environment as the "third teacher". Selected Montessori-inspired practices are included to support independence, order, practical life skills and respect for each child's pace of development.

1.2 Vision Statement

The vision of Little Owls Kindergarten is to create a warm, safe and high-quality early years environment where children are supported to grow as confident, independent and caring learners.

The kindergarten aims to provide an environment where children are encouraged to explore, question, create, communicate and participate actively in their own learning. Through a child-centred and emergent curriculum, the kindergarten supports children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive, creative and language development in ways that are meaningful and age-appropriate.

Little Owls Kindergarten values inclusion, diversity and respect for all cultures, languages, family backgrounds and individual needs. The setting aims to work in close partnership with parents and guardians to ensure continuity between home and school, supporting each child's well-being, identity and learning journey.

The long-term vision of the kindergarten is to offer high-quality early years education that reflects Maltese national expectations while embracing international inspiration from Nordic, Reggio Emilia and Montessori approaches.

2. Overview of Educational Programme of Study

Little Owls Kindergarten provides an educational programme for children aged three to five years. The programme is designed in line with A National Curriculum Framework for All (2012) and the Learning Outcomes Framework for the Early Years Cycle. It remains responsive to the developmental needs, interests, languages, questions and everyday experiences of young children.

The language of instruction is both Maltese and English. Children are supported in developing confidence in both languages through songs, stories, conversations, play, routines and meaningful daily interactions.

The educational programme is child-centred and follows an emergent curriculum approach. This means that learning experiences are planned around children's interests, observations, developmental needs and everyday experiences. Educators observe children carefully and use these observations to plan meaningful activities, projects and learning opportunities.

The programme supports learning through:

- play-based experiences;
- nature-connected, environmental and sustainability learning across indoor and outdoor spaces;
- creative exploration;

- sensory play;
- storytelling, songs and rhymes;
- early language and communication activities;
- early mathematical concepts;
- practical life experiences;
- social and emotional learning;
- movement and physical development;
- child-led projects;
- small-group and whole-group experiences;
- quiet, reflective and independent learning opportunities.

Learning is organised across a continuum of environments rather than being confined to one type of space. The on-site outdoor area is used routinely for movement, sensory exploration, weather and seasonal observation, planting, and supervised age-appropriate challenge. Indoors, educators extend this learning through plants, natural and reclaimed materials, investigation areas, seasonal collections, water, soil and seed experiences, open-ended resources and documentation. Planned educational visits provide additional opportunities to encounter the local environment and wider community.

Sustainability is embedded in everyday practice through caring for living things and shared spaces, reusing and repurposing materials, reducing unnecessary waste, sorting and recycling, conserving resources, and involving children in age-appropriate decisions about how materials and shared environments are used and cared for.

The programme also draws on Reggio Emilia principles. The environment is carefully prepared to be beautiful, welcoming and purposeful. Children's work, voices and learning processes are documented through photographs, observations, displays and portfolios. The setting recognises the environment as an important part of learning and aims to provide spaces that invite exploration, communication, creativity and collaboration.

Montessori-inspired practices are also included where appropriate. These support children's independence, care of self, care of the environment, concentration, order, practical life skills and respect for each child's pace of development.

The educational programme aims to support children to:

- feel safe, secure and emotionally supported;
- develop independence and self-confidence;
- communicate in Maltese and English;
- build positive relationships with adults and peers;
- respect diversity and difference;
- develop empathy and kindness;
- explore nature and the world around them;
- express themselves creatively;
- participate actively in daily routines and learning experiences;

- develop the foundations needed for lifelong learning.

3. Assessment Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises assessment as an ongoing, formative and authentic process that supports children's learning, development and well-being. Assessment is used to notice and understand each child's strengths, interests, learning dispositions and progress, identify support needs, and plan meaningful next experiences. It is not used to label children or to compare them against a fixed syllabus.

Assessment via observations takes place within children's ordinary play, routines, projects, conversations and interactions, in familiar settings and with educatotrs. Educators observe what children do, say, make, explore and revisit, and include children's voices and parents' or guardians' perspectives in developing a holistic picture of learning.

Assessment evidence includes:

- observations during play, routines, projects and interactions;
- developmental portfolios and learning stories;
- work samples, drawings, constructions and other representations of learning;
- photographs and other authorised documentation of learning experiences;
- educator reflection and professional dialogue;
- parent or guardian contributions and children's own comments, choices and reflections.

Each child has a developmental portfolio that documents the learning journey over time. The portfolio includes selected observations, photographs, learning stories, creative work, participation notes, examples of communication and evidence of developmental progress. Portfolios are confidential records and are shared only with authorised staff and the child's parents or guardians.

Scheduled parent or guardian meetings are held to discuss children's progress, well-being and development. Families contribute information about interests, routines, strengths, experiences and needs so that assessment reflects the child across home and kindergarten contexts.

Assessment information is used to:

- plan child-centred learning experiences;
- support children's individual needs;
- identify any concerns at an early stage;
- communicate progress with parents and guardians;
- support transition within the setting or to another educational stage;
- reflect on the effectiveness of the educational programme.

- Educators relate observations and documented learning to the five Early Years Learning Outcomes in the Learning Outcomes Framework. The outcomes act as an overall guide for recognising progress and identifying next steps; they are not treated as a prescriptive syllabus, a checklist to be completed, or an expectation that all children progress in the same way or at the same pace.

Little Owls Kindergarten ensures that assessment is inclusive, fair and developmentally appropriate. Children are assessed in a respectful manner, taking into account their age, language background, individual needs, personality, culture and pace of development.

4. Internal Quality Assurance Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to providing high-quality early years education in line with A National Curriculum Framework for All (2012), the Learning Outcomes Framework for the Early Years Cycle, the Early Childhood Education and Care (0–7 years): National Policy Framework for Malta and Gozo (2021), relevant national standards and DQSE quality assurance requirements. Internal quality assurance is a cyclical process of evidence gathering, internal review, analysis, action planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and renewed review.

The Head of School leads the internal quality assurance cycle. The LRP, Kindergarten Educators and relevant staff contribute evidence, professional reflection and agreed actions. The process is collaborative, documented and linked directly to improvement priorities.

The internal quality assurance cycle includes:

- systematic collection of evidence from children's learning, assessment records, attendance, safeguarding, health and safety, staff reflection and parent or guardian feedback;
- a thorough internal review and analysis of evidence against national expectations, the kindergarten's policies and identified priorities;
- professional dialogue, observation, mentoring and reflective review of pedagogy and practice;
- identification of strengths and clearly defined priorities for improvement;
- development of the School Development Plan and a SMART action plan following the internal review;
- allocation of responsible persons, resources, timeframes and success criteria for each agreed action;
- implementation of agreed improvement actions;
- ongoing monitoring of implementation and progress;
- evaluation of the impact of actions on children's experience, learning, inclusion, safety and well-being;
- review of policies, curriculum and procedures in response to evaluation findings;
- recording and communication of review findings and agreed next steps;

- a renewed evidence-gathering and review phase that begins the next quality assurance cycle.

Staff meetings are held regularly to examine evidence relating to children's learning and well-being, curriculum planning, inclusion, safeguarding, health and safety, attendance, parent or guardian feedback and implementation of improvement actions. One-to-one mentoring and professional support are provided according to identified staff development needs.

Lesson, play and activity observations are used to support professional development and to evaluate how effectively the kindergarten's pedagogical approach is being implemented. Each observation is followed by professional feedback, reflection and clearly recorded actions where improvement or follow-up is required.

Parent and guardian feedback forms part of the quality assurance evidence base and is gathered through scheduled meetings, day-to-day professional communication, questionnaires, parent discussions, workshops, open days and formal feedback opportunities.

Following the thorough internal review, the Head of School, with input from the LRP and educators, prepares the annual School Development Plan and corresponding action plan. The plan records the priority, intended outcome, action required, responsible person, resources, timeframe and success criteria. Priorities cover the areas identified by evidence, including pedagogy, staff development, curriculum, the learning environment, inclusion, health and safety, family engagement and administration.

The Head of School monitors the implementation of the action plan at agreed review points. Staff record progress, barriers, evidence of impact and any corrective action. Policies, procedures and curriculum documentation are reviewed when the evidence indicates that change is required and whenever national requirements are updated.

At the end of each review period, the kindergarten evaluates the impact of completed actions against the agreed success criteria. The findings inform the next internal review and the next cycle of school development planning, ensuring that quality assurance operates as continuous, evidence-informed improvement rather than as a one-off exercise.

5. Physical Resources Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that the physical environment has a significant impact on children's learning, safety, independence, participation and well-being. The kindergarten provides a safe, welcoming, accessible and stimulating environment and treats the organisation of space, materials and routines as an active pedagogical resource.

The physical resources of the kindergarten include:

- classrooms;
- an on-site outdoor learning area;
- toilets and hygiene facilities;
- learning materials;
- play resources;
- creative and sensory resources;
- age-appropriate furniture and equipment;
- cleaning and hygiene resources;
- first-aid resources;
- administrative and record-keeping facilities.

Classrooms are intentionally organised to encourage independence, exploration, creativity, communication and participation. Children can access appropriately placed resources and make meaningful choices. The learning environment includes open-ended resources, natural and reclaimed materials, plants and living things, sensory and investigation materials, practical-life resources, child-visible documentation and flexible spaces that can be reorganised in response to children's current interests and projects.

The on-site outdoor learning area is used as a regular part of daily provision, subject only to immediate health, safety and weather considerations. It supports movement, sensory exploration, planting in containers, care of living things, weather and seasonal observation, natural loose-parts play, water and soil investigation, imaginative play and supervised age-appropriate challenge. Planned local educational walks and visits to suitable green and community spaces extend children's direct engagement with the natural and social environment, following parental consent, appropriate supervision and risk assessment procedures.

The physical environment also supports sustainable habits. Children take part in caring for plants and shared resources, reusing and repurposing materials, sorting materials for recycling where facilities permit, reducing unnecessary waste, conserving water and treating resources with care. Indoor and outdoor spaces are planned as connected learning environments so that environmental inquiry and responsibility continue across the day.

Toilets and hygiene facilities are maintained in a clean, safe and child-appropriate manner. Children are supported to develop independence in personal care routines, while staff ensure that hygiene, dignity and privacy are respected.

The physical environment is checked regularly to ensure that it remains safe, fit for purpose and in line with applicable health and safety requirements in Malta. Equipment, furniture, outdoor areas and learning materials are monitored and maintained. Any damaged, unsafe or unsuitable resources are removed, repaired or replaced as necessary.

Maintenance checks are carried out by the responsible maintenance person, in liaison with the Head of School. Cleaning routines are carried out by designated cleaning staff and monitored by the Head of School or delegated person.

The kindergarten ensures that physical resources are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of children. Reasonable adjustments are made according to identified needs to support access, participation, communication and safety, in consultation with families and relevant professionals where required.

6. Human Resource Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that high-quality early years education depends on skilled, caring and professional staff. The kindergarten is committed to fair recruitment, appropriate induction, ongoing professional development and effective staff support.

The main staff roles within the kindergarten include:

- Head of School;
- Kindergarten Educators;
- Learning Support Educators;
- Administrator;
- Cleaner;
- Maintenance person.

The Head of School is responsible for the overall leadership, management and quality of the kindergarten. This includes oversight of curriculum, staff, safeguarding, health and safety, parent communication, policy implementation and compliance with relevant requirements.

Kindergarten Educators are responsible for planning and implementing developmentally appropriate learning experiences, observing and assessing children's progress, supporting children's well-being and working in partnership with parents and guardians.

Learning Support Educators form part of the classroom team and support the learning, participation, inclusion and well-being of all learners within the class. LSEs work collaboratively with the Kindergarten Educators to facilitate access to learning experiences, classroom routines, play, communication, social participation, independence, use of resources and the overall learning process.

Where one or more learners in the class have been formally granted support provision following assessment, the support provided within the classroom will also reflect the recommendations and level of provision identified in each learner's Statement of Needs. In such circumstances, the LSE contributes to IEP planning and in meeting the identified

needs of the learner or learners while continuing to work within an inclusive classroom approach that promotes participation, belonging, independence and learning alongside peers.

The Administrator supports the smooth running of the kindergarten, including communication, records, attendance, admissions and general administrative duties.

The Cleaner is responsible for maintaining cleanliness and hygiene within the setting.

The Maintenance person supports the upkeep, safety and repair of the premises, equipment and physical environment.

Recruitment is carried out in line with Jobsplus procedures, employment regulations and any applicable education-related requirements. The kindergarten aims to recruit suitably qualified, experienced and responsible staff who are committed to safeguarding, inclusion and high-quality early years practice.

Recruitment procedures include, as applicable to the role:

- publication of the vacancy;
- review of applications;
- interview and selection process;
- verification of qualifications and experience;
- reference checks where applicable;
- required employment documentation;
- valid Paediatric First Aid certification and valid food handling certification
- police conduct and relevant clearances as required;
- POMA clearance;
- confirmation of suitability for the role.

All new staff receive an induction. The induction introduces staff to the kindergarten's mission, vision, policies, procedures, safeguarding responsibilities, health and safety procedures, confidentiality requirements, behaviour approach, routines, curriculum and expectations for professional conduct.

Ongoing continuing professional development (40 hours) is planned through an annual needs analysis and the internal quality assurance process. Training covers relevant areas such as early years pedagogy, safeguarding, Paediatric First Aid, inclusion, health and safety, food handling, positive behaviour support, curriculum development, authentic assessment, communication with families, data protection and other identified priorities.

Staff supervision and mentoring take place through meetings, informal support, one-to-one discussions, observations and feedback. Performance and professional development are reviewed in a supportive and constructive manner.

Staff records are kept confidentially and securely and include, as applicable to each role, contracts, qualifications, training and certification records, performance reviews, statutory clearances and other required employment documentation.

7. Code of Ethics

Little Owls Kindergarten expects all staff to act professionally, respectfully and responsibly at all times. Staff are required to place the safety, well-being, dignity and best interests of children at the centre of their practice.

All staff are expected to uphold the following principles:

- respect for every child and family;
- inclusion and non-discrimination;
- professional integrity;
- confidentiality;
- appropriate professional boundaries;
- safeguarding responsibility;
- respectful communication;
- commitment to quality improvement;
- respect for colleagues and the kindergarten community.

7.1 Dress Code

Staff are expected to wear the kindergarten uniform and to maintain a smart, clean and appropriate appearance. Clothing must be suitable for working with young children and must allow staff to carry out their duties safely and comfortably. Revealing or inappropriate clothing is not permitted.

7.2 Mobile Phones

Personal mobile phones are not to be used during working hours except during designated break times. Staff must not use personal mobile phones to photograph, film or communicate about children. Kindergarten devices are to be used for authorised photographs, updates and communication through official kindergarten systems only.

7.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be upheld at all times. Staff must not discuss children, families, colleagues or internal kindergarten matters with unauthorised persons. Information about children and families must only be shared with relevant staff or professionals where there is a legitimate reason and in line with safeguarding and data protection procedures.

7.4 Professional Boundaries

Staff must maintain professional boundaries with children, parents, guardians and colleagues. Staff must not develop inappropriate personal relationships with families or use their professional position for personal benefit.

7.5 Behaviour Management

Staff must use respectful, developmentally appropriate and positive behaviour support strategies. Physical punishment, humiliation, intimidation, shouting in anger or degrading treatment are not permitted. Behaviour guidance must be consistent, fair and supportive.

7.6 Social Media

Staff must not post photographs, videos or information about children, families, staff or kindergarten matters on personal social media accounts. Communication and updates must only be shared through the kindergarten's official portals and approved communication channels.

7.7 Conflicts of Interest

Any actual or potential conflict of interest must be declared to the Head of School at the interviewing process or when the potential of conflict of interests arises, prior to further action. The Head of School will assess the situation and determine the appropriate action.

7.8 Communication with Parents and Guardians

Communication with parents and guardians must take place only through official kindergarten channels. Staff must not provide personal telephone numbers or communicate with parents through private social media or personal messaging accounts.

Any form of discriminatory, unethical or unsafe behaviour is not acceptable. Breaches of the Code of Ethics can result in disciplinary action.

8. Student Information and Support Systems Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to keeping accurate, confidential and secure records for all children. Student information is used to support children's learning, development, safety, well-being and continuity of care.

Student records include, where applicable:

- application and admission forms;

- personal details;
- date of birth;
- address;
- parent/guardian contact details;
- emergency contact information;
- attendance records;
- health information;
- medication records;
- vaccination records;
- consent forms;
- developmental observations;
- assessment records;
- developmental portfolios;
- reports relating to developmental needs, where applicable;
- safeguarding records where applicable;
- correspondence with parents or professionals;
- transition records.

All learners are required to have up-to-date vaccination records upon registration, unless otherwise supported by official medical documentation.

Records are stored on school devices only and are protected by passwords where they contain confidential information. Paper records, where used, are kept securely in a locked or restricted-access area.

Access to student records is limited to authorised persons only. This can include the Head of School, the LRP where applicable, and educators who require selected information to support the child appropriately. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis.

8.1 Admission Procedure

The admission process includes an initial meeting at the kindergarten, during which parents or guardians are shown the premises and provided with information about the setting, routines, policies and programme. An application is completed and a deposit is paid upon application, in line with the kindergarten's admissions arrangements.

8.2 Dismissal and Withdrawal Procedure

Parents or guardians who wish to withdraw their child from the kindergarten are required to give at least three months' written notice prior to leaving. A release or withdrawal confirmation can be signed once all pending payments and administrative requirements have been completed.

8.3 Attendance Procedure

Attendance is recorded daily for monitoring and quality assurance purposes. Accurate attendance records help the kindergarten monitor children's presence, identify patterns of absence and support safeguarding responsibilities.

8.4 Absenteeism

Parents and guardians are expected to inform the kindergarten if their child will be absent by 8.30am. If the kindergarten is not informed, the parent or guardian will be contacted by telephone. The reason for the absence will be recorded.

Persistent or unexplained absenteeism will be followed up by the Head of School or delegated person. Where concerns arise, appropriate action will be taken in line with safeguarding and support procedures.

8.5 Transition Arrangements

The kindergarten supports children during transitions, including movement from one class or group to another and preparation for primary schooling. Transition arrangements include educator-to-educator information sharing, parent or guardian meetings, developmentally appropriate preparation activities with children and support for emotional readiness, according to the transition being undertaken.

Parents and guardians are involved in transition discussions where appropriate, to ensure continuity between home, kindergarten and the next educational setting.

9. Partnership with Parents/Guardians Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises parents and guardians as children's first and most important educators. The kindergarten aims to build respectful, open and trusting relationships with families in order to support each child's learning, development and well-being.

The kindergarten promotes an open-door approach, while ensuring that communication remains professional, appropriate and respectful of daily routines. Parents and guardians are encouraged to share relevant information about their child's interests, health, routines, development, family context and any concerns.

Communication with parents and guardians takes place through the following official channels:

- scheduled termly progress meetings and additional formal meetings by appointment;
- official kindergarten email;

- telephone calls using official kindergarten contact arrangements when direct or urgent discussion is required;
- the parent handbook and admission information provided at registration;
- written development reports and portfolio-sharing discussions;
- open days and scheduled parent-and-child learning sessions;
- parent workshops and curriculum information sessions;
- official notices, calendars and updates;
- planned transition communication and meetings when children move between groups or educational stages.

Parents, guardians and staff can request an additional formal meeting when a matter requires more time than day-to-day communication allows. Meetings are arranged in advance through the official email or telephone contact. Scheduled termly progress meetings are held to discuss each child's learning, well-being, interests, strengths, development and next steps.

The kindergarten provides planned opportunities for families to participate in children's learning. These include at least one parent-and-child learning activity each term, portfolio and progress-sharing sessions, open days, and workshops or information sessions on areas such as play-based learning, early communication and literacy, early mathematical thinking through play, emotional well-being and positive behaviour, independence, transition and practical ways to support development at home. Families are also invited to contribute to projects through languages, stories, occupations, traditions, cultural experiences, objects or other relevant knowledge.

All communication must take place through official kindergarten channels. Staff must not use personal numbers, private messaging or personal social media to communicate with parents or guardians.

10. Inclusion Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to inclusion and believes that every child has the right to feel welcomed, respected, safe and able to participate fully in the life of the kindergarten. The kindergarten values diversity in culture, language, ability, family background, religion, ethnicity and individual development.

The kindergarten adopts a whole-school approach to inclusion. This means that inclusion is not viewed as the responsibility of one person only, but as a shared responsibility across the whole setting.

The kindergarten provides equitable access to learning and care for all children. It does not operate a fixed syllabus for KG1 and KG2. Planning is child-centred and emergent, based on observation of children's interests, strengths, developmental needs and experiences, while the five Early Years Learning Outcomes in the Learning Outcomes Framework provide the overall direction for pedagogy and assessment.

Inclusive and responsive provision includes:

- collaboration with parents and guardians regarding the child's strengths, interests, communication, routines and support needs;
- selection and adaptation of materials and open-ended resources so that children can participate from their current developmental level;
- adaptation of language, instructions, pace, grouping, positioning, adult scaffolding and the organisation of indoor and outdoor spaces;
- multiple ways for children to communicate and represent learning through speech, home language, Maltese, English, signs, visuals, gestures, movement, play, drawing, construction or assistive means;
- visual supports, modelling, repetition and predictable routines where these improve access and participation;
- individualised routines and reasonable adjustments where required;
- collaboration with Learning Support Educators, the Head of School and relevant external professionals, including the implementation of support provision specified in each learner's Statement of Needs where applicable;
- support with referral procedures and individual support planning where required;
- responsive support for disability, communication, emotional, behavioural, sensory or other identified needs;
- ongoing review of whether the adaptations are enabling meaningful participation and progress.
- These adaptations do not constitute changes to a fixed curriculum. They are pedagogical responses that enable each child to access broad, interest-led experiences and progress towards the Early Years Learning Outcomes through appropriate pathways and levels of support.

Educators are expected to observe children carefully and identify any support needs at an early stage. Concerns are discussed with the Head of School and parents or guardians in a sensitive and respectful manner.

The kindergarten promotes inclusive values through daily practice, stories, play, language, celebrations, resources and relationships. Children are encouraged to show kindness, empathy, respect and acceptance of others.

11. Behaviour Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten promotes positive behaviour through secure relationships, clear expectations, consistency, emotional support and developmentally appropriate guidance. Behaviour is understood as a form of communication, particularly in the early years.

The kindergarten uses a positive behaviour support approach. Staff model respectful communication, kindness, turn-taking, problem-solving and empathy. Children are

supported to understand feelings, express needs, manage frustration and develop social skills.

The behaviour approach includes:

- clear and simple expectations;
- positive reinforcement;
- modelling appropriate behaviour;
- visual reminders where useful;
- calm and consistent responses;
- support for emotional regulation;
- collaboration with parents and guardians;
- reasonable adjustments for children with additional needs.

The emphasis is on guidance, learning and support rather than punishment. Staff respond to behaviour in a calm, respectful and consistent manner, taking into account the child's age, development, communication and individual needs.

Behaviour requiring a planned response includes hurting others, damaging property, repeated unsafe behaviour, discriminatory language or behaviour, and repeated patterns of hurtful or excluding behaviour. When a staff member observes such behaviour, the staff member responds immediately to maintain safety, records significant or repeated incidents, informs the Head of School, and works with the child's educator and parents or guardians to agree appropriate support, follow-up and referral where required.

11.1 Anti-Bullying Procedure

Bullying is not tolerated at Little Owls Kindergarten. Because children aged three to five are still developing social understanding, staff distinguish ordinary conflict or one-off unkind behaviour from repeated patterns of intentional or harmful behaviour. Staff take all repeated hurtful behaviour seriously and act promptly.

Repeated hurtful behaviour can include:

- physical actions;
- verbal comments;
- exclusion;
- repeated unkind behaviour;
- indirect behaviour;
- online or digital behaviour where applicable.

The staff member who observes an incident or receives a concern intervenes to protect the children involved, records the factual details on the same day and reports the concern to the Head of School. The class educator provides emotional and practical support to the child who experienced the behaviour and guides the child who engaged in it to understand impact, develop empathy and practise safer ways of interacting.

The Head of School reviews the record, decides the proportionate response, informs the relevant parents or guardians, coordinates any support with the educator, relevant Learning Support Educators and other appropriate staff or professionals, taking account of any provision specified in a learner's Statement of Needs where applicable, and records the agreed follow-up. Staff monitor the situation and review whether the actions have been effective. Where the concern indicates a safeguarding risk, the Designated Safeguarding Officer follows the Child Protection Policy without delay.

12. Health and Safety Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff, parents, guardians and visitors. The kindergarten follows relevant Maltese health and safety requirements and ensures that daily practice supports the safety, well-being and protection of children.

The Head of School is responsible for overseeing health and safety procedures. All staff are responsible for following procedures, identifying risks and reporting any concerns immediately.

12.2 Fire Evacuation Procedure

Fire evacuation procedures are followed in line with the kindergarten's emergency evacuation plan. Staff are informed of the evacuation procedure and are expected to act calmly and promptly in the event of an emergency.

In the event of a fire alarm or emergency evacuation:

1. Staff lead children safely to the designated exit.
2. Children are guided calmly to the assembly point.
3. Attendance records are checked.
4. The Head of School or designated person confirms that all children, staff and visitors are accounted for.
5. No person re-enters the building until it is declared safe to do so.

Fire drills are carried out as required and records are kept.

12.3 Assembly Point

The assembly point is identified in the kindergarten's emergency evacuation plan and communicated to all staff. Staff are responsible for ensuring that children are safely supervised at the assembly point.

12.4 First Aid Arrangements

All staff hold current Paediatric First Aid training appropriate to their role. First-aid resources are available within the kindergarten, are accessible to authorised staff and are checked regularly.

Parents or legal guardians provide written consent at admission authorising the kindergarten to seek emergency medical assistance for their child when required. This consent forms part of the application and admission documentation. In an emergency, staff provide first aid within the limits of their training, contact emergency medical services on 112 immediately where urgent assistance is required, and inform the parent or legal guardian as soon as possible. Emergency action is not delayed while staff attempt to contact a parent or guardian.

12.5 Accident Reporting

Parents or guardians are informed of accidents through a telephone call where necessary. In urgent situations, medical support is called immediately.

An accident report is completed for all relevant incidents. The report is signed by the educator and by the parent or guardian. Accident records are stored securely and monitored as part of health and safety procedures.

12.6 Sick Child Procedure

Children who are unwell should not attend kindergarten. This includes, but is not limited to, children with fever, contagious illness, vomiting, diarrhoea or symptoms that can affect the health and safety of other children and staff.

If a child becomes unwell during the day, the parent or guardian is contacted and asked to collect the child. The child is kept comfortable and supervised until collected.

The kindergarten reserves the right not to admit a child who appears unwell or who presents symptoms that can pose a risk to others.

12.7 Medication Procedure

Medication is administered only where necessary and in line with parental consent and the kindergarten's procedures. Medication must be clearly labelled and provided with written instructions. Records are kept of any medication administered.

Staff must not administer medication without the necessary authorisation and documentation.

12.8 Cleaning Routines

Cleaning takes place daily. A more thorough cleaning routine is carried out twice weekly. Toys, textiles, learning materials, toilets, surfaces and all areas used by children are sanitised regularly.

Cleaning routines are monitored to ensure that the kindergarten remains clean, safe and hygienic.

12.9 Food and Hygiene Procedures

Every staff member whose duties involve food handling must complete the required food-handling course and hold a current Food Handlers Card/registration document in accordance with Maltese food safety requirements. The Head of School or Administrator verifies and records the validity of the required certification and registration before the staff member undertakes food-handling duties and monitors renewal dates. A staff member whose required registration has expired does not undertake food-handling duties until it has been renewed.

Good hygiene practices are promoted with children, including handwashing before eating, after using the toilet, after outdoor play and when necessary.

12.10 Healthy Lifestyle

Little Owls Kindergarten promotes a healthy lifestyle through daily routines, outdoor play, movement, hygiene practices, healthy eating habits and age-appropriate discussions about well-being.

12.11 Late Collection Procedure

Parents and guardians are expected to collect children at the agreed time. If a child is not collected on time, the kindergarten will contact the parents or guardians by telephone. If they cannot be reached, authorised persons listed on the child's records will be contacted.

If the child remains uncollected by 5:00pm and the kindergarten has been unable to reach the parents/guardians or authorised emergency contacts, the Head of School or delegated person will contact the Malta Police Force for guidance and assistance. The child will remain under the supervision of authorised kindergarten staff until responsibility is formally transferred to the appropriate authority. A written record of all telephone calls, decisions and actions taken will be completed.

12.12 Visitors' Procedure

Visitors must have confirmation and approval before entering the kindergarten. Visitors are required to follow the kindergarten's entry and dismissal procedures.

Signage is displayed at entry and dismissal points to guide visitors and support safety. Visitors are not permitted to move around the kindergarten unsupervised unless authorised.

12.13 Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are carried out regularly and before new or significantly changed activities, outings, equipment, processes or environmental arrangements. Assessments cover classrooms, the on-site outdoor area, equipment, activities, educational visits, cleaning materials, emergency procedures and relevant daily routines.

The staff member who identifies a hazard reports it immediately to the Head of School or delegated responsible person. Where a hazard presents an immediate or serious risk, staff stop the activity, isolate the area or remove the item from use at once. The Head of School records the hazard, assigns a responsible person and target date, and ensures that corrective action is completed within a reasonable timeframe proportionate to the level of risk. The Head of School verifies and records completion; any unresolved risk remains restricted and is escalated until suitable controls are in place.

13. Child Protection Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to safeguarding children and protecting them from harm. The kindergarten recognises its responsibility to provide a safe environment where children are respected, listened to and protected.

The kindergarten follows relevant Maltese legislation, national child protection procedures and safeguarding guidance. All staff are expected to act in the best interests of the child at all times.

13.1 Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer is **Ann Marie Grima Pulo**

13.2 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer is **Karl Pulo**

13.3 Staff Suitability

All staff members are required to provide the necessary documentation and clearances, including POMA clearance. Staff must also provide any other documentation required by the relevant authorities.

13.4 Safeguarding Concerns

If a safeguarding concern arises, staff must report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or, in her absence, to the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The concern is recorded clearly and confidentially. The Designated Safeguarding Officer follows the relevant Maltese safeguarding procedures and refers the matter to the appropriate external authorities where required.

Staff must not investigate safeguarding concerns themselves. Their responsibility is to observe, record and report concerns promptly.

13.5 Record Keeping

Safeguarding records are kept confidentially and securely on a password-protected school laptop/device. Access is restricted to authorised persons only.

Records are factual, dated and signed where appropriate. Information is shared only where necessary to safeguard the child and in line with legal and professional responsibilities.

14. Whistle Blowing Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten encourages a culture of openness, honesty and accountability. Staff and stakeholders have the right and responsibility to report serious concerns about malpractice, misconduct, unsafe practice or wrongdoing.

Whistleblowing concerns include serious matters such as:

- safeguarding concerns;
- unsafe practice;
- breaches of policies;
- unethical behaviour;
- discrimination;
- misuse of information;
- risks to children's safety and well-being;
- failure to follow legal or regulatory requirements.

Staff report serious concerns to the Head of School or the LRP. Where the concern involves the person to whom it would normally be reported, where internal reporting would be inappropriate, or where the concern is not addressed adequately, the person raising the concern can report directly to the appropriate external authority. Depending on the nature of the concern, this includes the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) for education and regulatory compliance; the Directorate for Child

Protection Services within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) for child safeguarding concerns; the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) for workplace health and safety matters; the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner (IDPC) for data protection matters; and the Malta Police Force for suspected criminal conduct or immediate danger.

All concerns are treated seriously and sensitively. The kindergarten aims to protect those who raise genuine concerns in good faith. Retaliation against a person who raises a concern is not acceptable.

Records of whistleblowing concerns are kept confidentially and securely.

15. Data Protection Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to protecting personal data and respecting the privacy of children, families, staff and stakeholders. The kindergarten handles personal data in line with applicable data protection legislation, including relevant Maltese and European Union data protection requirements.

The person responsible for data protection within the kindergarten is the Head of School.

15.1 Data Collected

The kindergarten collects and stores the following information where it is required for admission, education, care, safeguarding, administration or legal compliance:

- child's full name;
- date of birth;
- address;
- parent/guardian names;
- contact numbers;
- emergency contact details;
- medical information;
- medication records;
- vaccination records;
- past history relevant to the child's care and development;
- reports relating to developmental needs;
- attendance records;
- consent forms;
- photographs and videos where consent has been provided;
- assessment and developmental records;
- correspondence with parents or professionals.

15.2 Vaccination Records

All learners must provide vaccination records upon registration, unless otherwise supported by official medical documentation.

15.3 Photographs and Videos

Photographs and videos can be taken to document children's learning, development and participation in kindergarten activities. Parents and guardians declare upon application whether they consent to photographs and videos being taken and whether these can be used publicly.

No photographs or videos of children can be taken on personal staff devices. Only kindergarten devices and official kindergarten platforms can be used.

15.4 Consent

Consent is obtained through the registration and application process. Parents and guardians are informed about the type of data collected and the purposes for which it is used.

15.5 Storage and Access

Digital records are stored on school devices and protected by passwords. Paper records, where used, are stored securely.

Access to personal data is limited to authorised staff who require the information to carry out their professional responsibilities.

15.6 Retention of Records

Children's records are retained for two years following the child's departure from the kindergarten, unless a longer period is required by law, safeguarding requirements or official regulations.

15.7 Sharing of Information

Information is shared only where necessary, such as with parents or guardians, authorised staff, relevant professionals or external authorities where legally or professionally required.

16. Complaints and Appeals Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten aims to work in partnership with parents, guardians, staff and stakeholders. The kindergarten recognises that concerns can arise and is committed to addressing complaints in a fair, respectful and timely manner.

16.1 Raising a Concern

Parents, guardians or staff can raise a concern by:

- telephone call to the Little Owls Kindergarten official number;
- email to the Little Owls Kindergarten official email address;
- requesting a meeting with educators;
- requesting a meeting with the Head of School.

Where possible, concerns should first be discussed informally with the relevant educator or the Head of School.

16.2 Formal Complaint Procedure

If the matter is not resolved informally, a formal complaint can be submitted in writing by email. The complaint should include:

- the nature of the concern;
- relevant dates or details;
- persons involved, where applicable;
- any action already taken;
- the outcome being requested.

The Head of School reviews the complaint and can arrange a meeting with the person raising the concern. Relevant staff can be consulted where appropriate.

16.3 Expected Response Time

The kindergarten aims to acknowledge formal complaints within a reasonable timeframe and to respond as promptly as possible. Where a complaint requires further investigation, the complainant will be informed that additional time is required.

16.4 Appeal Process

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, an appeal can be submitted in writing. The appeal is reviewed by the Head of School and LRP.

16.5 Final Decision

Final decisions are made by the Head of School and LRP. Outcomes are communicated clearly to the parties concerned.

All complaints are handled respectfully, fairly and confidentially. Records of complaints and outcomes are kept securely.

17. Administration Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to effective, transparent and responsible administration. The kindergarten is led and managed in a manner that supports children's learning, safety, well-being and the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

17.1 Leadership and Governance

The Head of School is: **Ann Marie Grima Pulo**

The LRP is: **Karl Pulo**

The Directors are: **Ann Marie Grima Pulo and Karl Pulo**

The Head of School and LRP are responsible for decision-making, policy implementation, quality assurance, staff oversight, safeguarding, health and safety, parent communication and general administration.

17.2 Organisational Structure

The organisational structure of the kindergarten is as follows:

- Directors;
- Head of School;
- LRP;
- Kindergarten Educators;
- Learning Support Educators;
- Administrator;
- Cleaner;
- Maintenance person.

Roles and responsibilities are communicated to staff through induction, meetings and ongoing supervision.

17.3 Opening Hours

Little Owls Kindergarten operates from Monday to Friday, from 8:00am to 1:00pm.

Morning Club operates from 7:00am to 8:00am.

Dismissal procedures starts at 12.45pm.

Afternoon Club operates from 1.00pm-2.00pm.

17.4 School Calendar

The kindergarten follows a school calendar which includes term dates and holidays. Holidays include mid-term breaks, Christmas holidays, Easter holidays and summer holidays, as communicated to parents and guardians.

17.5 Year Planner

A year planner is prepared to outline key dates, including:

- term dates;
- holidays;
- parent meetings;
- open days;
- staff meetings;
- policy review dates;
- development report periods;
- training and CPD sessions;
- health and safety checks;
- internal review periods.

17.6 Administration and Records

Administrative records are maintained accurately and securely. These can include admissions records, staff records, attendance records, financial records, parent communication, policy documents, health and safety records, safeguarding records and quality assurance documents.

17.7 Stakeholder Involvement

Parents, guardians, staff and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to the development of the kindergarten through meetings, feedback, communication and participation in relevant events.

The kindergarten aims to operate in a transparent, professional and accountable manner, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of children and the setting.

18. Other Policies

In addition to the above policies, Little Owls Kindergarten has developed and implemented further policies according to the needs of the setting, national requirements and good practice. These policies are found in the Appendix of this document.

As follows:

- Admissions Policy;
- Medication Policy;
- Social Media Policy;
- Food and Nutrition (Healthy Eating) Policy;
- Educational Visits (Outings) Policy;
- Staff Well-being Policy;

These policies together with the Manual of Policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect the needs of the kindergarten, relevant Maltese legislation, DQSE requirements and national or European Union obligations.

Appendix A: Admissions Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is an independent kindergarten setting for children aged three to five years. The Admissions Policy outlines the procedures followed when parents or legal guardians apply for a place at the kindergarten. The policy aims to ensure that admissions are managed fairly, transparently and in the best interests of the child.

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and home-like environment. Admission is subject to availability, completion of the required documentation, payment of applicable fees and the kindergarten's ability to meet the child's needs within the available resources and staffing arrangements.

1. Application Procedure

Parents or legal guardians interested in registering their child at Little Owls Kindergarten are encouraged to contact the kindergarten to arrange an initial meeting and visit. During this meeting, parents or legal guardians are shown the premises and are provided with information about the kindergarten's educational approach, routines, opening hours, policies and procedures.

Following the visit, parents or legal guardians can submit an application form. Submission of an application does not automatically guarantee a place. Places are confirmed only once the application has been reviewed, required documentation is submitted, applicable fees are paid and written confirmation of acceptance is issued by the kindergarten. Applications are generally considered according to availability and the date of application.

2. Required Documentation Upon Application

Parents or legal guardians are required to submit the necessary documentation before the child starts attending the kindergarten.

Required Document	Purpose
Completed application/registration form	To collect essential child and family information
Child's birth certificate	To confirm the child's identity and date of birth
Copy of parent/legal guardian identification documents	To confirm parental/legal responsibility and contact details
Proof of address	To maintain accurate records
Emergency contact details	To ensure the child's safety in case of emergency
Names and ID details of authorised persons for collection	To ensure that the child is released only to authorised adults
Vaccination/immunisation records	To confirm that health records are available upon registration

Medical information and allergy information	To support the child's health and safety
Medication information, where applicable	To ensure safe procedures if medication can be required
Reports relating to developmental, behavioural, emotional, language or learning needs, where applicable	To support inclusion and appropriate planning
Consent forms	Including consent for photographs/videos, outings, data protection and emergency procedures
Previous school/kindergarten records, where applicable	To support continuity and transition

Where a child or parent/legal guardian is not a Maltese national, additional documentation can be requested in line with applicable Maltese identity, residence and immigration requirements. This can include valid passports, residence documentation, permits or other official documents requested by the relevant Maltese authorities.

The kindergarten can request further information where needed to safeguard the child, support inclusion, or comply with national requirements.

3. Vaccination and Health Information

All learners must provide vaccination or immunisation records upon registration, unless otherwise supported by official medical documentation.

Parents or legal guardians must inform the kindergarten of any medical condition, allergy, dietary requirement, medication need, developmental concern or other information that can affect the child's care, learning, safety or well-being.

Parents or legal guardians are responsible for updating the kindergarten if there are any changes to the child's health, medication, emergency contacts or authorised collection persons.

4. Admission Meeting

Before the child starts attending, the kindergarten holds an admission meeting with the parents or legal guardians. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- discuss the child's routine, interests and needs;
- explain kindergarten policies and procedures;
- confirm collection arrangements;
- discuss health, allergies, medication or dietary requirements;
- discuss any developmental or inclusion needs;
- explain fees and payment terms;
- support the child's transition into the setting.

5. Fees

Parents or legal guardians are required to pay the applicable fees according to the fee structure issued by Little Owls Kindergarten. Fees are reviewed and increased yearly or periodically and parents/legal guardians will be informed in advance of any changes.

5.1 Fees Structure

Fee Type	Amount	When Payable	Notes
Registration Fee	€250	Upon application	Non-refundable unless otherwise stated in writing
Deposit	€1,000	Upon acceptance of place	Secures the child's place, will be collected as part of term 1 fee
KG Year 1 Term Fee *(per term)*	€1150	At the beginning of each term *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Covers the child's place and attendance during standard kindergarten Year 1 hours
KG Year 2 Term Fee *(per term)*	€1300	At the beginning of each term *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Covers the child's place and attendance during standard kindergarten Year 2 hours
Resources Fee *(per year)*	€120	Per Year *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Covers learning materials, craft resources, portfolios, classroom resources and other educational materials
Morning Club Fee	€250	Per Term *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Applies for attendance between 7:00am and 8:00am
Afternoon Club Fee	€250	Per Term *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Applies for attendance between 1:00pm and 2:00pm
Club DUO Fee *Morning Club + Afternoon Club Registration*	€400	Per Term *(See payment schedule 6.1)*	Applies for Morning Club and Afternoon Club *(if both are applicable)*
Late Collection Fee	€10	Per 15 minutes	Applies where the child is collected after 1.00pm *(not registered for Afternoon Club)*
Outings or Special Activities Fee	Max. €15	As applicable	Parents will be informed in advance
Uniform Fee	3rd Party payment applies	As needed	3rd Party fees apply

6. Payments

6.1 Payment Schedule

Parents/Guardians are kindly requested to follow the payment schedule below. Fees are payable per child and must be settled by the stated deadlines. Deadline dates will be communicated to parents/ legal guardians prior to the beginning of the scholastic year.

Payment	Deadline	Amount
Term 1 Tuition Fee	By 1st September	€1150 (Year 1) €1300 (Year 2)
Term 2 Tuition Fee	By 10th December	€1150 (Year 1) €1300 (Year 2)
Term 3 Tuition Fee	By 10th March	€1150 (Year 1) €1300 (Year 2)
Term Resources Fee	By 1st September	€120 *per year*
Annual Outings/Activities Fee	Per outing / activity as requested	N/A
Morning Club Fee (7.00am-8.00am), if applicable	Per Term, following term fee deadlines	€250
Afternoon Club Fee (1.00pm-2.00pm), if applicable	Per Term, following term fee deadlines	€250
Club DUO: Morning Club and Afternoon Club (if both are applicable)	Per Term, following term fee deadlines	€400
Late Collection Fee, if applicable	Upon request and as needed	€10 per 15 mins.

6.2 Sibling Discount

A sibling discount applies when more than one child from the same immediate family is enrolled at Little Owls Kindergarten during the same scholastic year.

Child	Discount
First child	Full applicable fee
Second child	€150 discount per term
Third child and subsequent children	€150 discount per term

The sibling discount applies to tuition fees only. It does not apply to resources fees, outings/activities fees, morning club fees, afternoon club fees, late collection fees or any other additional fees.

6.3 Payment Terms

Fees are payable in advance according to the payment schedule communicated by the kindergarten. Payments must be made by the due date indicated in the fees schedule. Parents/Guardians are responsible for ensuring that payments are made on time and that the correct payment reference is included.

Fees remain payable during periods of absence, sickness, holidays, travel or non-attendance, as the child's place remains reserved.

Late or outstanding payments can result in reminders being issued. Continued non-payment can affect the child's continued place at the kindergarten. Where legally and procedurally appropriate, the kindergarten reserves the right to withhold education services, release documentation, reports or other non-statutory documents until all pending payments have been settled.

7. Absence and Non-Attendance

Fees remain payable during periods of absence, including sickness, holidays, travel or non-attendance, as the child's place remains reserved.

Parents or legal guardians are expected to inform the kindergarten if the child will be absent. Where the kindergarten is not informed, staff can contact the parents or legal guardians to confirm the reason for absence.

8. Withdrawal from the Kindergarten

Parents or legal guardians who wish to withdraw their child from Little Owls Kindergarten are required to provide at least three months' written notice.

All pending payments must be settled before the child's final release documentation is issued. A withdrawal or release form can be signed once the necessary administrative and financial procedures are completed.

9. Refusal or Deferral of Admission

Little Owls Kindergarten aims to be inclusive and supportive. However, admission can be refused or deferred where:

- there are no available places;
- the required documentation has not been provided;
- applicable fees have not been paid;
- the child is below or above the age range accepted;
- the kindergarten is unable to meet the child's needs safely within available resources;
- parents or legal guardians do not agree to follow the kindergarten's policies and procedures;
- admission can compromise the safety or well-being of the child or others.

Where possible, the kindergarten will discuss concerns with parents or legal guardians and can recommend further professional guidance, support or referral.

10. Settling-In and Transition

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that starting kindergarten is an important transition for children and families. A settling-in period is arranged to help the child become familiar with the environment, educators, routines and peers.

The settling-in process includes:

- an initial visit with parents or legal guardians;
- gradual attendance where appropriate / needed;
- communication between parents and educators;
- sharing information about the child's routine and preferences;
- emotional support during separation;
- review of how the child is settling in.

Children are supported sensitively and respectfully during this period. Parents and educators work together to decide what is in the best interests of the child.

11. Data Protection and Confidentiality

All information collected during the admissions process is treated confidentially and stored securely. Information is used only for legitimate kindergarten purposes, including registration, safeguarding, health and safety, communication, learning support, administration and compliance with legal or regulatory requirements.

Access to child records is restricted to authorised persons only, including the Head of School, LRP and relevant educators who require selected information to support the child.

12. Agreement with Policies and Procedures

Upon registration, parents or legal guardians are required to confirm that they have read, understood and agreed to follow the kindergarten's policies and procedures.

The kindergarten reserves the right to update its policies and procedures when necessary. Parents or legal guardians will be informed of significant changes in writing.

Appendix B: Medication Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to safeguarding children's health, safety and well-being. This Medication Policy outlines the procedures to be followed when a child requires medication during kindergarten hours.

Medication will only be administered when this is necessary for the child's health and where the appropriate written consent and information have been provided by the parent/legal guardian. All medication procedures must be followed carefully, recorded accurately and carried out in line with the kindergarten's duty of care, health and safety responsibilities, safeguarding procedures and data protection requirements.

1. Parental/Guardian Consent

Upon application, all parents/legal guardians are required to read and sign the **Parental/Guardian Agreement to Administer Medication Form**. The form also provides permission to Little Owls to refer to emergency medical services, prior to contacting the parents/ guardians if the need arises.

This form confirms whether the parent/legal guardian gives consent for Little Owls Kindergarten to administer medication where required and according to the kindergarten's procedures.

Medication will not be administered unless the kindergarten has received the required written consent and clear instructions from the parent/legal guardian.

Parents/legal guardians must also inform the kindergarten (verbal and in writing) at application or when symptoms develop, of any medical condition, allergy, regular medication, emergency medication or health need that can affect the child's care, safety or participation in kindergarten activities.

2. Information Required Before Medication is Administered

Before any medication is administered, parents/legal guardians must provide the following information in writing:

- child's full name;
- name of medication;
- reason for medication;
- dosage to be administered;
- time medication is to be administered;
- method of administration;
- duration of treatment;
- possible side effects;
- storage instructions;
- expiry date;
- name and signature of parent/legal guardian;
- emergency contact details.

Where medication is prescribed, the medication must be in its original packaging and clearly labelled with the child's name, dosage and instructions.

3. Types of Medication

Medication can include, but is not limited to:

- prescribed medication;
- emergency medication;
- allergy medication;

- asthma inhalers;
- medication for fever or pain relief, where authorised;
- medication linked to a medical condition;

The kindergarten reserves the right to refuse to administer medication if instructions are unclear, medication is not labelled properly, consent has not been provided, the medication has expired, or staff are not appropriately trained to administer it safely.

4. Medication Storage

All medication must be handed directly to the Head of School, educator or authorised staff member. Medication must not be left in a child's bag, lunch bag or personal belongings.

Medication will be stored safely and securely according to the instructions provided. Medication that requires refrigeration will be stored in a safe and appropriate manner.

Emergency medication must be accessible to authorised staff while remaining safely stored away from children.

5. Administration of Medication

Medication will only be administered by an authorised member of staff.

Before administering medication, staff must check:

- the child's identity;
- the medication name;
- the dosage;
- the time of administration;
- the method of administration;
- the expiry date;
- the written parental/legal guardian consent;
- any relevant medical instructions.

Staff must follow the written instructions provided. Medication must never be guessed, changed or administered without proper authorisation.

Where staff have any doubt, medication must not be administered until clarification is obtained from the parent/ guardian or an appropriate medical professional.

6. Medical Procedures and Limitations of Staff Role

Little Owls Kindergarten staff can administer medication only where this is authorised in writing by the parent/ guardian and where the procedure falls within the staff member's role, competence and training.

Kindergarten staff are not permitted to carry out medical or clinical procedures that require specialist medical training. This includes, but is not limited to:

- changing wound dressings;
- catheter care or catheter changes;
- injections, unless specifically authorised and covered by an emergency medical plan and appropriate staff training;
- tube feeding;
- suctioning;
- management of medical equipment;
- any invasive or clinical procedure requiring a nurse, doctor or other qualified medical professional.

Where a child requires such medical procedures during kindergarten hours, arrangements must be made by the parent/legal guardian for these to be carried out by an appropriately qualified medical professional. The kindergarten can support the child's attendance where it is safe and reasonable to do so, but it cannot take responsibility for procedures that fall outside the role and training of kindergarten staff.

Where a child has ongoing medical needs, the Head of School can request an Individual Health Plan, medical guidance and a meeting with the parent/legal guardian and relevant professionals before confirming the arrangements required to safeguard the child's health, safety and well-being.

Staff must never attempt a medical procedure that they are not trained, authorised or competent to perform. In the case of a medical emergency, staff will contact emergency medical services and the parent/ guardian immediately.

7. Medication Log

A Medication Log will be maintained for any medication administered at Little Owls Kindergarten.

The Medication Log will include:

- child's full name;
- date;
- time medication was administered;
- name of medication;
- dosage administered;
- reason for administration;
- name and signature of staff member administering the medication;
- name and signature of witness, where applicable;
- parent/legal guardian signature upon collection, where required;
- any comments, concerns or observed side effects.

Medication logs are kept securely and confidentially as part of the child's records.

8. Refusal, Omission, Error or Adverse Reaction

If a child refuses medication, staff will not force the child to take it. The parent/legal guardian will be informed as soon as possible, and the refusal will be recorded in the Medication Log.

If medication is omitted, given late, or if there is any medication error, the Head of School must be informed immediately. The parent/legal guardian will be contacted, and medical advice will be sought where necessary.

If a child shows signs of an adverse reaction, staff will seek urgent medical assistance where required and contact the parent/legal guardian immediately.

All refusals, omissions, errors or adverse reactions will be recorded clearly.

9. Emergency Medication and Medical Conditions

Where a child has a known medical condition requiring emergency medication, parents/legal guardians must provide full written information and any necessary medical documentation.

An Individual Health Plan can be prepared where required. This can include information about:

- the child's condition;
- signs and symptoms to look out for;
- medication required;
- emergency procedures;
- contact details;
- role of staff;
- when to call emergency services.

Staff will be made aware of relevant information on a need-to-know basis to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

For illness, exclusion from attendance and collection when a child becomes unwell, parents, guardians and staff follow Section 12.6 Sick Child Procedure of this Manual. This Medication Policy does not duplicate that procedure.

10. Responsibility of Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- completing and signing the required medication consent forms;
- providing medication in its original packaging;
- ensuring medication is clearly labelled;
- ensuring medication is in date;

- informing the kindergarten of any changes to medication or dosage;
- collecting medication when it is no longer required;
- updating medical records and emergency contact details;
- providing medical documentation where required.

11. Responsibility of Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- following this Medication Policy;
- checking consent before administering medication;
- recording all medication administered;
- storing medication safely;
- informing the Head of School of concerns;
- reporting medication errors immediately;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- acting in the best interests of the child.

Staff must never administer medication that has not been authorised or that falls outside the kindergarten's procedures.

12. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All medication information is treated confidentially. Medication forms, medical information and medication logs are stored securely and accessed only by authorised staff who require the information to support the child's health and safety.

Medication records form part of the child's confidential records and are retained in line with the kindergarten's Data Protection Policy and record retention procedures.

13. Review of Policy

This Medication Policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect the needs of the kindergarten, Maltese health and safety requirements, safeguarding responsibilities and any relevant national guidance.

Appendix C: Social Media Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that photographs and videos can be useful for documenting children's learning, sharing special moments with parents/guardians and celebrating the life of the kindergarten. At the same time, the kindergarten is committed to safeguarding children, respecting family choices and protecting children's privacy and personal data.

This policy outlines how photographs, videos and social media content are managed at Little Owls Kindergarten.

1. GDPR and Data Protection

Photographs and videos of children are considered personal data. Little Owls Kindergarten processes such data in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Regulation (EU) 2016/679, and applicable Maltese data protection legislation.

The kindergarten will ensure that photographs and videos are collected, stored and shared lawfully, fairly and transparently. Consent will be obtained from parents/legal guardians upon application and will be specific to each purpose, including internal documentation, developmental portfolios, parent communication groups, displays and official social media platforms.

Parents/legal guardians have the right to withdraw or amend consent at any time by informing the Head of School in writing. Withdrawal of consent will not affect the child's attendance, participation or access to learning opportunities.

Where consent is not granted, Little Owls Kindergarten will take reasonable steps to ensure that the child is not identifiable. This can include blurring the child's face and any distinguishing features or avoiding the use of the image/video altogether.

2. Parental/Guardian Consent

Upon application, all parents/legal guardians are required to complete and sign the **Parental/Guardian GDPR Consent Form for Photographs, Videos and Social Media Use**.

Parents/legal guardians will be asked to clearly indicate whether they:

- agree to their child being photographed or filmed for internal kindergarten purposes;
- agree to their child's photograph or video being included in their developmental portfolio;
- agree to their child's photograph or video being shared in parent communication groups;
- agree to their child's photograph or video being shared on official Little Owls Kindergarten social media platforms;

- agree to their child's photograph or video being used for displays, newsletters or promotional material;
- do not agree to their child's photograph or video being shared publicly.

Consent must be provided in writing. Parents/legal guardians can withdraw or amend their consent at any time by informing the Head of School in writing.

3. Use of Photographs and Videos

Photographs and videos can be used for the following purposes, where consent has been granted:

- documenting children's learning and development;
- sharing updates with parents/guardians;
- displaying children's work and experiences within the kindergarten;
- preparing developmental portfolios;
- celebrating kindergarten activities, events and outings;
- sharing approved content on official Little Owls Kindergarten social media platforms;
- sharing approved content in official parent communication groups;
- preparing newsletters or promotional material, where consent has been granted.

Photographs and videos will only be used in a respectful and appropriate manner.

4. Official Kindergarten Devices Only

Staff are not permitted to take photographs or videos of children using their personal mobile phones, tablets, cameras or any other personal device.

All photographs and videos must be taken using authorised kindergarten devices only.

Photographs and videos must not be stored on personal devices, personal cloud accounts or private storage platforms.

5. Social Media Use

Only approved members of staff can upload content to the official Little Owls Kindergarten social media platforms.

Staff must not share photographs, videos, names, personal information or any details about children on their personal social media platforms.

Staff must not share images or videos of children through personal messaging applications, private social media accounts or personal email accounts.

All communication and sharing of photographs or videos must take place only through official kindergarten channels and approved platforms.

6. Parent Communication Groups

Photographs and videos can be shared in official parent communication groups only where parental/legal guardian consent has been provided.

Parent communication groups are used to support communication between the kindergarten and families. Parents/guardians are reminded that photographs or videos shared within parent groups must not be downloaded, copied, reposted, forwarded or shared publicly without permission.

The kindergarten expects all parents/guardians to respect the privacy of other children and families.

7. Where Consent is Not Granted

Where permission is not granted for a child's photograph or video to be shared, Little Owls Kindergarten will respect this decision.

In such cases:

- the child will not be intentionally photographed or filmed for public sharing;
- the child's face and any distinguishing features will be blurred or made non-identifiable if the child appears incidentally in a group photograph or video;
- staff will take reasonable steps to avoid including the child in social media content;
- the child will not be named or identified in any public post.

No child will be excluded from learning experiences, activities or events because consent for social media use has not been granted.

8. Identification of Children

Little Owls Kindergarten will avoid sharing unnecessary identifying information about children.

When photographs or videos are shared publicly, the kindergarten will not normally include:

- the child's full name;
- address;
- date of birth;
- personal contact details;
- medical information;
- sensitive family information;
- any information that can place the child at risk.

Where names are used, this will be limited and only where appropriate and consent has been provided.

9. Safeguarding and Dignity

Photographs and videos must always respect the dignity, safety and privacy of children.

The kindergarten will not take or share photographs or videos of children:

- during toileting or changing;
- when they are distressed;
- when they are undressed or partly dressed;
- in any situation that can embarrass, shame or expose the child;
- in any context that can compromise the child's safety or dignity.

Any concern about inappropriate use of images must be reported immediately to the Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Officer.

10. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for:

- following this Social Media Policy;
- checking consent before sharing images or videos;
- using only authorised kindergarten devices;
- not storing images or videos on personal devices;
- not sharing images or information on personal social media;
- protecting children's privacy and dignity;
- reporting any breach or concern immediately to the Head of School.

Any breach of this policy can be treated as a serious matter and can result in disciplinary action.

11. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians are expected to:

- complete the consent form upon application;
- inform the kindergarten in writing if they wish to change or withdraw consent;
- respect the privacy of other children and families;
- not share, repost or forward images from parent groups without permission;
- raise any concern directly with the Head of School.

12. Data Storage and Retention

Photographs and videos are treated as personal data and are stored securely. Access is limited to authorised staff only.

Images and videos will be retained only for as long as necessary for the purpose for which they were collected, unless they form part of a child's developmental portfolio, kindergarten record or approved archive.

Consent forms relating to photographs, videos and social media use are kept securely as part of the child's records.

13. Review of Policy

This Social Media Policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect safeguarding responsibilities, data protection requirements, kindergarten practice and parental expectations.

Appendix D: Food and Nutrition (Healthy Food) Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten is committed to promoting children's health, well-being and positive attitudes towards food and physical activity. The kindergarten recognises that early childhood is an important stage for developing lifelong healthy habits. This policy is guided by the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy and wider Maltese public health guidance on food, nutrition and physical activity applicable within the Maltese educational context.

This policy applies to all food and drinks brought into or provided within the kindergarten, including snacks, lunches, celebrations, outings and special activities.

1. Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Little Owls Kindergarten promotes a healthy, safe and inclusive food environment for all children.

The kindergarten aims to:

- encourage healthy eating habits from an early age;
- support children's independence during snack and meal routines;
- respect children's dietary, cultural, medical and religious needs;
- reduce the consumption of foods high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats;
- work in partnership with parents/guardians to promote children's health and well-being.

2. Healthy Food Expectations

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide healthy and balanced food for their child. Food should be age-appropriate, easy for the child to eat and suitable for the kindergarten routine. Little Owls Kindergarten is a 'nut free school'. Therefore, no nuts are allowed to decrease potential risk and hazard.

Recommended foods include:

- fresh fruit;
- vegetables;
- wholemeal bread or wraps;
- plain crackers or breadsticks;
- yoghurt with no added sugar or low sugar content;
- cheese in suitable portions;
- pasta, rice or couscous meals;
- lean meat, eggs or fish, where appropriate;
- legumes and other healthy homemade meals;
- water as the main drink.

Food should be prepared and packed safely in clean, clearly labelled containers.

3. Discouraged Foods and Drinks

Little Owls Kindergarten promotes healthy eating and therefore discourages foods and drinks that are high in sugar, salt or unhealthy fats.

Parents/guardians should avoid sending:

- sweets and chocolates;
- fizzy drinks;
- energy drinks;
- sugary juices;
- highly processed snacks;
- crisps and salty snacks;
- cakes, pastries and biscuits as regular snacks;
- foods containing excessive sugar or artificial additives;
- chewing gum;
- hard sweets or foods that can pose a choking risk
- food containing nuts.

Water is encouraged throughout the day. Children should bring a clearly labelled water bottle.

4. Celebrations and Birthdays

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that birthdays and special occasions are meaningful for children and families. However, celebrations should remain in line with the kindergarten's healthy food approach.

Parents/guardians who wish to bring food for a celebration must discuss this with the kindergarten beforehand.

Where food is brought for a celebration:

- it must be agreed in advance with the Head of School or educator;
- allergy and dietary information must be considered;
- food must be suitable for young children;
- healthier options are encouraged;
- items must not contain nuts;
- food must be clearly labelled where appropriate.

5. Allergies and Dietary Requirements

Parents/guardians must inform the kindergarten upon application of any allergies, intolerances, medical dietary needs, cultural food requirements or religious dietary requirements.

Information about allergies and dietary needs will be recorded and shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

Where a child has a significant allergy or medical dietary need, the kindergarten can request:

- medical documentation;
- an Individual Health Plan;
- emergency medication, where required;
- clear written instructions from parents/guardians;
- a meeting with parents/guardians before the child starts attending.

The kindergarten will take reasonable steps to reduce risk, but parents/guardians remain responsible for ensuring that food sent from home is safe and suitable for their child.

6. Food Handling and Hygiene

All staff involved in food handling are required to follow appropriate food hygiene procedures. Staff who handle food must have the relevant food handling training.

Staff must ensure that:

- hands are washed before and after food handling;
- children wash their hands before and after eating;
- tables and eating areas are cleaned before and after meals;
- food is stored safely;
- children's lunchboxes and bottles are clearly labelled;
- food is not shared between children;
- any spills or food waste are cleaned promptly;
- food-related incidents are reported to the Head of School.

Children are supported to develop good hygiene habits in a calm and age-appropriate manner.

7. Supervision During Eating

Children are supervised during snack and meal times. Staff support children to eat safely, independently and respectfully.

Staff will:

- ensure children are seated safely while eating;
- monitor for choking risks;
- encourage children to eat at their own pace;
- support independence with opening containers and using utensils;
- encourage positive table manners;
- avoid forcing children to eat;
- inform parents/guardians if there are concerns about eating, appetite or food refusal.

Meal and snack times are treated as positive social learning experiences.

8. Food Sharing

Children are not permitted to share food with one another. This is to protect children with allergies, intolerances, medical needs, dietary restrictions and family preferences.

Staff will explain this to children in a gentle and age-appropriate way.

9. Role of Staff

Staff are expected to model and encourage healthy habits. Staff should speak positively about food, movement and well-being.

Staff must not use food as a punishment, reward or behaviour-management tool. Children should not be shamed or criticised for their food choices, appetite or eating habits.

Where concerns arise regarding a child's nutrition, eating behaviour, allergies or health, staff must discuss the matter with the Head of School and, where appropriate, with parents/guardians.

10. Role of Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are expected to support this policy by:

- providing healthy snacks and meals;
- sending water as the main drink;
- informing the kindergarten of allergies or dietary needs;
- ensuring food is safe, fresh and age-appropriate;
- labelling lunchboxes, bottles and containers;
- avoiding foods that are not permitted or discouraged;
- discussing celebration food with the kindergarten in advance;
- updating the kindergarten if the child's dietary or medical needs change.

The kindergarten works in partnership with parents/guardians to support children's health and well-being.

11. Healthy Eating Education

Healthy eating is promoted through everyday experiences and age-appropriate learning opportunities.

This can include:

- stories about food and health;
- fruit and vegetable exploration;
- cooking or food preparation activities;
- sensory food activities;
- discussions about water and hydration;
- gardening or nature-based experiences;
- learning about different foods and cultures;
- encouraging children to make healthy choices.

Children are encouraged to develop positive relationships with food without pressure or judgement.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and reviewed regularly.

The policy can be reviewed in response to:

- updated national guidance;

- health and safety requirements;
- feedback from parents/guardians;
- children's needs;
- allergy or dietary concerns;
- staff observations;
- changes in kindergarten practice.

Appendix E: Educational Visits and Outings Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that educational visits and outings can enrich children's learning by providing meaningful, real-life experiences beyond the kindergarten environment. Outings can support children's social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive development, while also promoting curiosity, independence, confidence and connection with the wider community.

This policy outlines the procedures followed before, during and after educational visits and outings to ensure that children's safety, well-being and learning remain central at all times.

1. Purpose of Educational Visits and Outings

Educational visits and outings are organised to support the kindergarten's educational programme and child-centred approach.

Outings can include, but are not limited to:

- visits to parks or outdoor spaces;

- nature-based learning experiences;
- cultural or community visits;
- theatre or storytelling events;
- seasonal activities;
- educational workshops;
- visits linked to children's interests or current projects.

All outings must be age-appropriate, meaningful, inclusive and linked to the children's learning and development.

2. Parental/Guardian Consent

Parents/Guardians will be informed in advance of any planned outing. Information provided can include:

- date of the outing;
- destination;
- purpose of the visit;
- departure and return time;
- transport arrangements, where applicable;
- clothing or items required;
- food and drink arrangements;
- any additional fee, where applicable.

Written consent must be obtained from parents/guardians before a child attends an outing. Children will not be permitted to attend an outing unless the required consent has been provided.

3. Risk Assessment

A risk assessment will be carried out before every educational visit or outing.

The risk assessment will consider:

- the destination and environment;
- transport arrangements;
- adult-to-child supervision;
- road safety;
- access and mobility;
- toilets and hygiene facilities;
- food and drink arrangements;
- allergies and medical needs;
- weather conditions;
- emergency procedures;
- first-aid arrangements;
- individual needs of children;
- safeguarding considerations.

Any identified risks will be reviewed and reasonable control measures will be put in place before the outing takes place. If the outing is considered unsafe, it will be postponed or cancelled.

4. Supervision and Staffing

Children will be supervised at all times during outings. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios will be maintained according to the age and needs of the children, the type of outing and the level of risk involved.

All staff attending the outing are responsible for:

- supervising children closely;
- following the risk assessment;
- ensuring children remain with the group;
- carrying emergency contact details;
- supporting children's safety and well-being;
- responding promptly to any concern or incident;
- maintaining professional conduct throughout the outing.

A designated person will be responsible for leading the outing and ensuring that procedures are followed.

5. Children Not Attending the Outing

Parents/Guardians will be informed that, on outing days, all staff members can be required to attend the outing to ensure adequate supervision and safety.

Therefore, if a child does not attend the outing, the child will need to remain at home for that day. The kindergarten will not be able to provide an alternative supervision service on site where all staff members are attending the outing.

Parents/Guardians will be informed of this arrangement in advance when the outing details and consent form are issued.

6. Transport Arrangements

Where transport is required, transport arrangements will be planned in advance and communicated to parents/guardians.

The kindergarten will ensure that transport arrangements are appropriate, safe and suitable for young children. Children will be supervised when boarding, travelling and leaving the transport.

Parents/Guardians must ensure that children arrive on time on the day of the outing. Late arrival can result in the child being unable to attend the outing.

7. First Aid and Medication

A first-aid kit will be taken on all outings. At least one trained first-aider will be available during the outing where required.

Where a child requires medication during an outing, this must be managed in line with the kindergarten's Medication Policy. Medication must be clearly labelled, authorised in writing and carried safely by the designated staff member.

Emergency medication, such as inhalers or allergy medication, must be taken on the outing where applicable.

8. Emergency Procedures

Emergency contact details for all children attending the outing will be available to authorised staff.

In the event of an accident, illness, lost child concern or other emergency, staff will follow the kindergarten's emergency procedures. Parents/Guardians will be contacted as soon as possible where necessary.

Where urgent medical assistance is required, emergency services will be contacted immediately.

All incidents will be recorded and followed up upon return to the kindergarten.

9. Food, Drink and Clothing

Parents/Guardians can be asked to provide suitable food, water, clothing, hats, jackets or other items depending on the outing.

Food and drink must follow the kindergarten's Food and Nutrition Policy. Children should bring water as the main drink, and food must be clearly labelled and suitable for the child.

Parents/Guardians must inform the kindergarten of any allergies, dietary needs or medical concerns before the outing.

10. Behaviour and Safety Expectations

Children will be supported to follow simple and age-appropriate safety rules during outings. Staff will explain expectations clearly before and during the outing.

Children will be encouraged to:

- stay with their educator or group;
- listen to staff instructions;
- walk safely;

- respect others;
- care for the environment;
- participate positively in the outing.

If there are concerns that a child's behaviour can place themselves or others at risk during an outing, the Head of School can discuss suitable arrangements with the parents/guardians before the visit.

11. Cancellation or Changes

The kindergarten reserves the right to cancel, postpone or amend an outing due to:

- unsafe weather conditions;
- transport issues;
- health and safety concerns;
- staffing concerns;
- low attendance;
- illness or emergency;
- any other matter affecting children's safety or well-being.

Parents/Guardians will be informed of any significant changes as soon as possible.

12. Outings Fee

Where an outings or activities fee applies, parents/guardians will be informed in advance. The outings fee can cover transport, entrance fees, activity costs or other related expenses.

The outings fee is generally non-refundable if a child does not attend due to absence, sickness or other personal reasons, as arrangements and costs can have already been confirmed.

13. Review of Policy

This Educational Visits and Outings Policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect health and safety requirements, safeguarding responsibilities, risk assessment procedures and the needs of the kindergarten.

Appendix F: Staff Well-being Policy

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises that staff well-being is essential to providing a safe, caring and high-quality educational environment for children. The kindergarten is committed to promoting a respectful, supportive and healthy workplace where staff are treated with dignity and where their physical, emotional and professional well-being is protected.

This policy is guided by relevant Maltese employment and occupational health and safety legislation, applicable European Union principles on health and safety at work, and good practice relating to psychosocial well-being, work-life balance and respectful workplace culture.

1. Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Little Owls Kindergarten supports staff well-being through clear procedures, respectful communication, safe working practices and access to support when needed.

The kindergarten aims to:

- promote a positive and respectful working environment;
- support staff mental, emotional and physical well-being;
- encourage healthy work-life balance;
- prevent workplace stress, burnout and organisational bullying;
- ensure fair treatment and professional respect;
- support staff through supervision, mentoring and communication;

- signpost staff to appropriate local services where further support is needed;
- ensure adherence to workers' rights under Maltese and EU legislation.

2. Respect for Workers' Rights

Little Owls Kindergarten respects the rights of workers in line with applicable Maltese employment law, occupational health and safety requirements and relevant European Union principles.

This includes respect for:

- fair and lawful working conditions;
- appropriate working hours and rest periods;
- leave entitlements;
- safe working conditions;
- dignity at work;
- non-discrimination;
- equal treatment;
- protection from harassment, bullying or victimisation;
- access to support and guidance where needed.

Staff are expected to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and can seek clarification from the Head of School or relevant official entities where needed.

3. Positive Workplace Culture

Little Owls Kindergarten promotes a workplace culture based on:

- respect;
- trust;
- teamwork;
- professional communication;
- fairness;
- confidentiality;
- inclusion;
- shared responsibility;
- reflective practice;
- constructive feedback.

All staff are expected to contribute to a positive working environment and to treat colleagues, children, parents/guardians and visitors with dignity and respect.

4. Zero Tolerance to Organisational Bullying

Little Owls Kindergarten has zero tolerance for organisational bullying, harassment, intimidation, victimisation or any behaviour that undermines the dignity and well-being of staff.

Organisational bullying can include, but is not limited to:

- repeated unfair criticism;
- humiliation or belittling;
- shouting, threatening or intimidating behaviour;
- exclusion or isolation;
- spreading rumours;
- unreasonable workload pressure;
- misuse of authority;
- unfair treatment;
- undermining a staff member's professional role;
- withholding information needed to perform duties;
- retaliating against staff who raise concerns.

Any staff member who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassment is encouraged to report the matter to the Head of School, LRP or another appropriate person. Concerns will be treated seriously, sensitively and confidentially.

Where necessary, the matter can be addressed through supervision, mediation, formal investigation, disciplinary procedures or referral to relevant external authorities.

5. Work-Life Balance

Little Owls Kindergarten recognises the importance of work-life balance in supporting staff well-being and preventing stress and burnout.

The kindergarten will aim to support work-life balance by:

- planning staff duties fairly and reasonably;
- respecting rest periods and leave entitlements;
- discouraging unnecessary communication outside working hours;
- encouraging staff to take breaks where possible;
- promoting realistic workloads;
- supporting staff to raise workload concerns;
- considering flexible arrangements where reasonable and operationally possible;
- encouraging staff to maintain healthy boundaries between work and personal life.

Staff are encouraged to speak to the Head of School if they are experiencing workload pressure or difficulty maintaining work-life balance.

6. Prevention of Stress and Burnout

The kindergarten recognises that working in early years education can be emotionally and physically demanding. Staff can experience stress due to workload, child-related concerns, safeguarding responsibilities, parent communication, illness, personal circumstances or organisational pressures.

The kindergarten will aim to reduce stress and burnout by:

- maintaining clear roles and responsibilities;
- ensuring staff know who to approach for support;
- providing regular staff meetings;
- offering one-to-one mentoring and supervision;
- encouraging early discussion of concerns;
- promoting teamwork and shared problem-solving;
- providing access to training and professional development;
- reviewing workload and routines where concerns arise;
- encouraging staff to seek support before difficulties escalate.

Psychosocial risks can include work organisation, workload, interpersonal relationships and work-life balance, all of which can affect staff well-being.

7. Staff Supervision and Support

Staff will be supported through supervision, mentoring and regular communication.

Support can include:

- one-to-one meetings;
- informal check-ins;
- feedback following observations;
- team meetings;
- mentoring for new staff;
- support following difficult incidents;
- guidance on managing professional challenges;
- referral or signposting to external support where needed.

Supervision is intended to support staff development, professional reflection and well-being. It should be carried out respectfully and constructively.

8. Local Services and External Support

Where staff require support beyond what the kindergarten can provide, they can be signposted to relevant local services or professional support.

This can include:

- a general practitioner or medical professional;
- mental health professionals;
- counselling or psychological services;
- community support services;
- employment-related support services;
- occupational health and safety guidance;
- emergency services in urgent situations.

Where a staff member is experiencing significant distress, the Head of School or LRP can encourage the staff member to seek professional help. In an emergency, appropriate emergency services will be contacted.

The kindergarten recognises that seeking help is a responsible and positive step and should not be treated as a weakness or failure.

9. Confidentiality

Staff well-being matters will be treated confidentially and sensitively.

Information will only be shared where necessary, such as:

- with the staff member's consent;
- where there is a safeguarding concern;
- where there is a serious risk to the staff member or others;
- where required by law;
- where necessary for employment, health and safety or operational reasons.

Records relating to staff well-being, supervision or concerns will be stored securely.

10. Staff Responsibilities

Staff are expected to:

- treat colleagues with respect and dignity;
- communicate professionally;
- raise concerns at an early stage where possible;
- follow kindergarten policies and procedures;
- support a positive team culture;
- respect confidentiality;
- avoid gossip, exclusion or harmful workplace behaviour;
- seek support where needed;
- contribute to their own well-being and professional development.

Staff must not engage in bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or behaviour that negatively affects the well-being of others.

11. Leadership Responsibilities

The Head of School and LRP are responsible for promoting a healthy and respectful workplace culture.

They will aim to:

- model respectful communication;
- respond appropriately to staff concerns;
- support fair workload distribution;
- promote staff development;
- encourage work-life balance;
- address bullying or harassment concerns;
- monitor staff well-being where concerns arise;
- ensure staff are aware of relevant policies;
- signpost staff to support services where needed.

12. Reporting Concerns

Staff who have concerns about their well-being, workload, workplace relationships, bullying or any other matter affecting their work should report the concern to the Head of School or LRP.

Where the concern relates to the Head of School or LRP, staff can use the Whistleblowing Policy or seek advice from an appropriate external authority.

Concerns will be handled fairly, sensitively and without retaliation.

13. Review of Policy

This Staff Well-being Policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect staff needs, Maltese legislation, EU principles, occupational health and safety guidance and good practice in early years education.

Staff feedback will be considered as part of the policy review process.