

CODE of ETHICS

For Early Years Teachersⁱ in Ireland

Preamble

This document outlines the values and ethics underpinning the work of the Early Years Teacher regardless of position. It offers to Early Years Teachers a set of principles to provide a reference point in guiding day-to-day decision making.

The Code of Ethics of Early Years Teachers is centred on the rights of the child and the rights of the child's parent/guardian as the natural and first educator of their children. It is also based on Síolta, the national quality framework for early childhood education (CECDE, 2006), Aistear, the national curriculum framework for the early years (NCCA, 2009) and the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter (DCYA, 2016).

The Early Years Teachers will use this Code of Ethics as a foundation on which to develop policies, procedures and practice. It is designed to be applied in working with children, parentsⁱⁱ, services, or within communities. Similarly, in emphasising the professional nature of early childhood education, it respects and encourages the teacher's own judgements which are a fundamental part of early years pedagogy. The term 'early years teacher' as used in the Code refers to the members of the early childhood education and care profession.

Values Statement

Early Years Teachers acknowledge that:

- Every child is unique and has inalienable rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be valued, respected, nurtured, and supported in its own right;
- The young child is innately driven to learn and is an active agent in her/his own development through her/his interactions with the world. The young child is a competent and confident learner;
- Early childhood education and care takes place in the context of family, community and culture;
- Children thrive best in caring and democratic communities;
- Play is a key means of supporting young children's learning and development

Early Years Teachers, in undertaking their roles and tasks, will seek to promote and maintain these values.

Principles of Early Years Teaching

1. The child's individuality, strengths, needs and rights are central in the provision of quality early childhood education and care settings. Children have the right to be listened to and appropriately responded to.
2. Parents are the primary educators of the young child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his health, well-being, learning and development. Open, honest and respectful partnership with parents is essential in promoting the best interests of the child. Implicit to this is the need to support parents and families in that role.
3. Positive relationships, which are secure, responsive and respectful and which provide consistency and continuity over time, are the cornerstone of the child's well-being.
4. Equality, as articulated in Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and in the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, is a fundamental characteristic of quality early childhood care and education provision.
5. Early Years Teachers respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity valued.
6. The health, well-being, safety, welfare and education of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.
7. Early Years Teachers understand the role of play as central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.
8. Throughout childhood, care and education are inseparable and Early Years Teachers express this by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the young child.
9. Early Years Teachers value training and professional qualifications, and participate in continuous professional development. They will assist students of Early Years Teaching in their learning.
10. In seeking to respond to the needs of young children, Early Years Teachers will seek to involve other professionals and agencies as appropriate.
11. Early Years Teachers, having taken into account the rights of others, will provide service users with full information, including access to records pertaining to work on their behalf.
12. Early Years Teachers will act with responsibility, accountability and integrity at all times. Early Years Teachers should be prepared to reflect on and state the reasons for their practice and decisions.
13. Early Years Teachers will respect a service user's right to confidentiality. It is the duty of the Early Years Teacher to ensure that the nature and limits of the privacy inherent in their relationship are clearly understood and applied.
14. Early Years Teachers actively promote children's citizenship in their local, regional and national communities.

Early Years Forum, Department of Children & Youth Affairs, Dublin, April 2018

ⁱ The term 'early years teacher' as used in this Code refers to the members of the early childhood education and care profession. This term was preferred by a majority of practitioners in a recent survey.

ⁱⁱ The term parent is used to include parents, guardians and all persons who act in "loco parentis"