

# Stepping Stones Childcare Policies & Procedures Manual



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## **Our Mission Statement**

“We provide an environment in which all children are supported to reach their full potential.”





## **Our Holistic Programme**

**Stepping Stones is a group of licenced, state-of-the-art childcare and pre-school centres with a 10 year impeccable reputation.**

Stepping Stones centres are situated in Fgura, Birkirkara (Ta' Paris), Qawra, Marsascala and now opening in Smart City. Our centres are aimed to provide flexibility that can provide a good family life balance and thus centres operate from 6am till 6pm and 24/7 available for babysitting services.

Childcare involves the holistic development of children including their social, language, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Our creative curriculum is planned yearly and is based on a self-discovery concept where children are given the opportunity to be messy, creative, curious and free to try it all!

Activities include Messy play, weekly cooking club, crafts, creative arts, gardening, puppet shows, physical exercise and dancing dressing up, painting with several objects and hands, outings, storytelling and outdoor activities.

Children that attend our afternoon club have a special program of activities which are involve all the above activities and a special quite area for relaxing activities.

During our hot summer days the children have the opportunity to play in fresh water pools under protective canopies of an outdoor area. With such a varied program, everyday children are learning something new with planned and purposeful activities which provide opportunities for teaching and learning, both indoors and outdoors.

Our aim is to meet all children's needs by providing high quality childcare within a warm, friendly, secure and stimulating atmosphere. All children and families are treated equally regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or disability. We believe in an individual approach, enabling all children to develop and grow at their own pace.

Our staff is very well cared for and we encourage team work all year round through team building exercises and staff outings. Good interaction between staff, parents and children, helps to each child's happiness and stability both at home and in the Childcare Centre.

A daily routine is carefully planned to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop through play children are divided into separate areas according to different age groups, partly so that babies are not disturbed by our active toddlers and also because there are different carer to child ratios according to the age of children.

It is our policy to respect the individuality of all children and adults involved in our service and to promote positive attitudes to differences of culture, race, gender, language, financial circumstance or membership of a minority group.

### **Equal Opportunity Procedure**

- Recruitment and employment of staff will comply with all relevant equality legislation – see recruitment guidelines.
- The service is open to all families in the community.
- A range of activities is chosen to reflect various differences in cultures, gender and ability.
- We check our materials to ensure that they challenge stereotyping and positively and accurately reflect cultural and racial diversity.
- Special dietary needs of children and adults are catered for.
- We will challenge any statements or behaviour by anyone in the service which are racist or sexist or which reinforce stereotypes or which are in any other way derogatory to an individual or group.
- We insure equal access for children with any special needs, equal access to sporting, play, recreational and leisure activities.
- Children at Stepping Stones have the same access to facilities, services and opportunities and they are not disadvantaged by age, disability or by culture.

### **Babies' area**

Our bright colored Lion cubs section is catered for our little ones. Babies have their daily routine which is well planned with the carer and parents of the child. At Stepping Stones we do our best to see that children are developing according to these milestones. Babies attending the centre will be provided with a daily report covering what the child did that day, hours of sleep, nutritional information, nappy changing and other reflections on the child's day at Stepping Stones.

### **Toddlers' area**

Toddlers are very busy here at Stepping Stones with tailored made activities according to the month's theme. Through these activities and experiences children are supported into a larger group whilst encouraging individual abilities. Enabling all toddlers to develop and grow at their own pace. Good interaction between staff, parents & toddlers helps to ensure each toddler's happiness and stability both at home and in the Childcare Centre. Records & observations are recorded on each child which enable carers to plan appropriate activities to aid children's learning. A daily report is maintained for each child throughout the day.

### **Preschool Area**

Play is children's natural language and at Stepping Stones preschool children develop their learning through play and our messy play programs. We have a wide range of toys and equipment so that children's individual needs are met daily. Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage sets out five areas of learning:

- Personal, social and emotional development;
- Communication, language and literacy;
- Knowledge & understanding of the world;
- Physical development;
- Creative development;

### **Kindergarten**

*Play, fun & Learn Classes* are held **Mondays to Fridays**, between **9.00 a.m.** and **1.00 p.m.**, however parents can bring and pick up their children **at any time** during regular daycare service between **6.00 a.m.** and **6.00 p.m.**

Our classes are small and individual attention is given. We work together with parents to provide the best possible start in education. We strive to make the children's day as fun as possible allowing them to learn as they play. By the age of five, they will be well-prepared to attend primary school.

At Stepping Stones you can enroll your child during the year and not just before the first semester starts. Every child can join Kinder classes at any stage of the year.

## **1. Admission to child day care facility**

- Prior to a child's attendance at the centre the parents or guardians must complete and sign the registration form, government form and fill in the child's background information sheet. This will provide the centre with the following vital information:
  - Name, home address and date of birth of each child.
  - Starting date and number of sessions per week required.
  - Arrangements for payment of fees and registration fee
  - Name, address and telephone numbers of parents or guardians.
  - Emergency telephone numbers.
  - Pick up authorisations
  - Special diets.
  - Health history
  - Details of any allergies.
  - Parental consents on emergency procedures.
- During the settling in session prior to the child's first day, a parent will also be asked to complete the Background Information Sheet which provides the preschool with further information. This includes details of who will be collecting the child and the child's likes and dislikes. This extra information enables us to get to know the child quickly and helps with the settling in process.
- Before the child's first day a session is held with the child and his carer with the presence of a parent to discuss child's behavior and milestones. This gives the opportunity for the mother to get to know the carer of the child and the child to observe also the carer on a one to one basis. This may reduce any separation anxieties both for the parent and the child.

- Parents are obliged to attend the induction meeting with the centre's Managing Director.

## **2. Government Scheme Service Users Terms and Conditions**

1. Children whose parents are in work or in education can benefit from the free childcare scheme. 'Parents in work' is defined as both parents / guardians who are in work, or single mother / father / guardian who are in work and paying social security contributions. 'Parents in education' is defined as both parents / guardians who are in education leading to a recognised diploma or degree or single mother / father / guardian who are in education. Parent/s is / are entitled to free Childcare for all children of childcare-age, at a rate which is pro-rata to the mother's (or single father) employment hours.
2. Parent/s is /are to inform the provider of any changes in the number of hours and days of service one month in advance according to the Government deadline which date will be provided in Stepping Stones Newsletter.
3. Parent/s is / are urged not to over-book more hours of childcare than what is necessary. In case of overtime or unforeseen circumstances, an additional allowance of 10% over the booked hours will be paid by the government if utilised.
4. Parent/s can consume more hours over and above the additional allowance of 10% that they are entitled to with the free Childcare scheme. These hours will be noted as extra hours and parent/s must pay the provider directly. Providers must inform parents of the chargeable rate prior to registration.
5. Parent/s has / have to present a medical certificate when a child is sick for more than 3 days, in order to be allowed to re-attend child care. Parent/s are entitled to a monthly absence allowance of 10% under the booked hours. For example for a 100 hour monthly pack, a child can attend a minimum of 90 hours. Furthermore, an additional yearly absence allowance of 15% over the booked hours applies.
6. Parent/s is/are free to avail themselves of free childcare within the childcare centre of their choice (provided that the childcare centre enters into the free child care scheme agreement with Government)
7. Free Childcare is terminated once the child is eligible to enrol into Kindergarten 1.
8. Government will continue to pay for free Childcare while the mother is availing herself of maternity leave. Free Childcare is not extended to parental leave.
9. Parent/s will be able to opt either for free Childcare of the tax rebate scheme

### **3. Working in partnership with parents**

At Stepping Stones we welcome the presence and involvement of the parents especially during the initial stages of their child's introduction to the service and also throughout the time the child attends the service. The centre recognizes that working in partnership with parents is of major value and importance to our early learning centre in enabling it to provide a happy, caring and stable environment for children and their parents. We aim to form a good relationship with parents so that information regarding their children (be it developmental, social or health related) can be exchanged easily and comfortably by preschool staff and parents. We try to help parents adjust to different situations and also first time parents.

**The list below shows ways in which we will try to achieve a strong working partnership with parents:**

- Parents are invited for the induction meeting
- The Coordinator/Manager in charge is always available for discussion with parents. Parental meetings are held on a regular basis on appointment. Since parents are very busy, arrangements can be made for more private discussions at agreed times.
- Information provided by parents about their children will be kept confidential and treated on a strict need to know basis.
- Information regarding the children's activities throughout the day is always available to parents on a daily basis through reports, through verbal communication and through the newsletter which is delivered to parents every term.
- Parents are invited to Open Days twice a year, the children are encouraged to show their crafts and activities to their parents.
- An evaluation sheet are given to parents every parental meeting and can be filled anonymously from our website.
- Parents are encouraged to come to our open days.
- If we have any concerns about a child's well being during the day every effort will be made to contact the parents or their emergency contact.
- When possible, to further encourage the children's development, parents will be asked to send in objects from home, e.g. photographs, old boxes and cartons, cereal boxes, egg cartons etc to involve them in our activities.

- Parents are encouraged to participate in the cooking activities during our diversity themed days.
- Parents are requested to keep us informed of any changes to personal circumstances which may have an effect upon a child, e.g. change of address, telephone number, doctor, emergency contact.
- The carers at Stepping Stones consult with parents the progress and development of the children daily and maintain a good and friendly relationship with them.
- The staff ensures that all the children feel included, secure and valued. They build positive relationships with their parents on order to work effectively with them and their children.
- The carer fills in a daily report for children in her group provided by the centre which indicates the child routine at the centre including food intake, nappy change/potty training, activities and any other information that the parent needs to know.
- Stepping Stones organizes outing for children and parents are encouraged to join and participate.
- Parents are also requested to keep us informed of any circumstances which could have an effect on a child's emotional well being, e.g. bereavement, separation or illness in the family.

#### **4. Safety of children**

- It is our policy to provide a healthy and safe environment for staff and children.
- At all times our employees will cooperate fully in implementing health and safety initiatives. They will do everything possible to make sure injuries do not occur to themselves or to others.
- We expect our employees to take responsible care of their own health and safety at all times.
- The staff is responsible for locking cupboards and the store room, reporting broken locks or missing keys.
- The premises are kept well maintained and cleaned on a daily basis routine. We have a part time cleaner and handy man that are responsible for the cleaning and maintenance. The cleaner has a log book to sign her work daily.

- Washing of the premises and toilets are disinfected daily with wiping of all objects used by the children and staff.
- Staff uses disposable gloves in assisting children during potty training and the changing of nappies, or dealing with vomit or blood. Nappies are put in nappy disposable bags and in an air tight recipient. Garbage is taken out every evening and nothing is left inside the bins.
- Hand washing is strictly noticed at all times and children are encouraged to wash their hands after each activity, especially before eating. Children have appropriate charts in the premises to promote hand washing.
- The management and staff at stepping Stones is provided with a first aid course.
- A first aid box is always available which is stocked on a regular basis.
- Only medicines that have been prescribed by a doctor and provided by parents can be given to children in our care. A medical care plan will be completed by parents, recording the timing and dosage of medicines to be given to their child as requested by them. These instructions will be signed, dated and the time noted each time the medication is administered. All medicines will be stored in the fridge in the centre.
- The premises are equipped with a fire safety equipment. In case of a fire the staff are to follow the fire drill that is practiced twice a year and evacuate the children accordingly. The children are the first priority and immediate action is to be taken to safe guard the children and staff. We have a daily register with all the children attending on that particular day; this is to be taken out with the carer to head count all the children. All rooms will be re checked after all the children are safe. The carers will call the fire department on the 112 which is written near the telephone.

### **Food and drink policy**

- At stepping Stones Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating.
- Before a child starts to attend our early learning centre, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs, including any allergies.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up-to-date.

- Children do not have specific time to eat but we encourage that every hour children have a snack. During those hours if a child is hungry he or she will be provided with food.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all staff and students are fully informed about them.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents' wishes.
- We provide nutritious food at snacks, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We welcome foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- We use lunch break to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day and during activities.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the centre.
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- We have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another in order to protect children with food allergies..

## **5.Fees**

- Parents are requested to pay the monthly fee in advance and discuss with the centre's coordinators or the Manager, the best pack that meets the family needs.
- Extra hours for the government scheme or any other hours charged at the centre will be charged with the rate of €3 per hour.
- Parents need to advise one month before the termination of their child, from attending the centre as parents will still be charged for the following month.
- Hours cannot be transferred for the following months.
- Fees are not refundable.

## **6. Sick child and accident management**

- Sick children will not be accepted in the centre and will be sent home, a medical certificate needs to be presented to confirm when child is fit for school.
- If a child becomes ill we will take every step possible to contact parents, but if this is not possible, we will take responsible measures to care for the child. We will expect parents to cooperate with us by not bringing children to the centre if they have any infectious or contagious illness. Staff will also be asked not to attend work under the same circumstances.
- The sick child will be kept in a sick bay while being taken care of by a carer until the parents collect their child.
- Parents need to call the centre before 8am to advise that the child will not be attending the centre.
- After three days of absence the centre requires a medical certificate in order for the child to attend nursery.

### **Procedure to be followed in the event of an accident**

- If a child or a member of staff has an accident they will receive first aid by a member of staff.
- Gloves will be worn when dealing with blood or any other bodily fluids.
- The wound will be cleaned with sterile cloths or a cold compress applied. No ointments or plasters can be used.

- If hospital attention is needed then the manager or the supervisor will make that decision and will take the necessary action and call 112 for an ambulance.
- If the accident has happened to a child and the child need medical assistance, the parents will be informed immediately by the manager or supervisor.
- The accident will be recorded in the injury report. It will state the time it happened, the date, how it happened, first aid given and will be signed by the staff and parent/carer.

## **7. Behaviour Management**

Stepping Stones staff is trained to be very positive at all times towards the children, towards each other and towards the childcare centre. Any issues or problems arising with children, other members or staff or parents should be discussed in private with the manager. The passing of negative comments about parents, other staff or children is not acceptable in any other forum. We notice that sometimes children will pick up speech habits from their parents, and may use speech which is inappropriate. If this happens the parent must be contacted immediately and the difficulty pointed out. The parent must be requested to work with the child to show the child that the comments the child has made are not acceptable within the school.

- The staff members ensure that children are not bullied or threatened while in their care.
- Children are not given physical punishment nor are they exposed to intellectual, emotional or verbal abuse.
- The staff members work in a respectful and courteous partnership with parents and children to promote positive behavior.
- When a child does something inappropriate:
  - The carers will address and respond to a child's difficult behavior in a firm, caring and sensitive manner that promotes positive interactions between the carer and child and between the child and the other children.
  - The carer explains to the child why, what he/she was doing was wrong.
  - Shows positive guidance.
  - The child will be re-directed to other positive behaviours.

- The carer helps the child to foster the ability to become self-disciplined.
- Children will receive positive reinforcement when they show positive behavior.

### **Prohibited Discipline**

- No corporal punishment such as hitting, spanking or beating.
- No negative reinforcement.
- No threats of corporal punishments.
- No abusive language.
- No force feeding.
- No form of public humiliation.
- No emotional, verbal, physical or any form of abuse will be tolerated in the centre.

### **8. Child protection**

- When parents sign our registration form they are abiding to all our policy manual and also our child protection policy form; The manager explains to the parents that if any staff member has any suspicion regarding any form of child abuse, after first consulting with the manager, it is reported to the child protection unit at Appogg on 179.

#### **If a child arrives with injuries the staff should:**

- If possible ask the parent/carer how the injuries occurred.
- Explanations, however puzzling, should be accepted and accusations should not be made.
- Make a written record, including diagrams, of observations and explanations given. Have a witness wherever possible. This recording of information is to ensure that reasonably full and clear information is obtained.
- If you suspect that the injuries have been caused by assault or by failure to protect child the manager will report to Agenzija Appogg on 179.
- Ensure that any documentation relating to suspected abuse or neglect is stored in a secured locked area and released only to authorized persons under legal request.

## **9. Child's personal records**

- Children's personal records include registration and admission forms, signed consent forms, and correspondence concerning the child or family, an ongoing record of relevant contact with parents, and observations by staff on any confidential matter involving the child, such as developmental concerns or child protection matters.
- These confidential records are stored in a lockable cabinet and are kept secure by the Manager in a suitably safe place.
- Parents have access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs. Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the role of the key person.

## **10. Transition**

At Stepping Stones we are aware that children are especially susceptible to changes in routine, new environments and to separation from their parents or guardians. Children might experience separation anxiety when placed into the care of someone with whom they are not familiar. Therefore, we have developed a highly effective, developmentally appropriate plan for transitioning children into our early learning center and, once they have entered our program, from one class to another.

### **Daily transition**

- Some partings are especially tearful, and parents are always welcome to call anytime to see how their children are doing.
- When parents drop their children they can stay in the childcare centre until they feel comfortable to leave their child and a proper good bye is done. The child is explained by the parents that he or she will be picked up soon.
- Parents will be supplied with a daily report of the child to facilitate the transition from our childcare centre to their homes.
- Parents are also encouraged to call at the centre should they wish to check on their child.

### **Transition from one section to the other**

- Children are encouraged to take their creative arts material home and a template is given to the child's new carer so the activities are built up on to each other.
- A child development report is filled both from the carer and the manager so that the new teacher will be informed on the millstones and tailored activities that were done with the child. The report will include:
  - Early learning goals
  - Communication, language and literacy
  - Knowledge and understanding the world
  - Creative development
- Before each transition period, our children have a small party where they sing a goodbye song with the carer and we surround the children with love and hugs.
- A graduation celebration is held every January and September for all those children who will be moving to kindergarten.

### **10. Uncollected child**

- The preschool obviously has an obligation to stay with any uncollected child at the end of the day, until that child is collected.
- The preschool must not release the child to an unauthorized person, even if the collection is late, unless an authorized person telephones to state that because of an emergency a different person will be collecting.
- The authorized person should give the name and address and an ID card number of the unauthorized person and the manager should check this description before permitting the child to leave.
- A record will be kept in the register of all children who are not collected by the due time. This will note the date, the time at which the child was collected, who collected the child, and the reason given.
- In the event that a child is not collected by the due time on three occasions in one year the parent will be written to by the preschool, pointing out the difficulties late collection causes the preschool, and either:

- a) Informing the parent that the child will not be able to attend preschool any further if this happens again, or
- b) Informing the parent that a charge of €7 will be charged for every hour that the child is left on the premises after the final collection time.
- In the event of a parent or designated person failing to collect a child, every effort must be taken by the registered person to contact that person as soon as possible. If all attempts to contact a parent/guardian, designated person or emergency contact fail, the registered person should inform the police to become in charge of the situation in helping to trace the parent/guardian of the child.

## **11. Staff recruitment**

- When a suitable applicant with relevant childcare experience and/or qualifications contacts us we arrange for the applicant to come to our office for an interview.
- At interview we go through the applicant's past work experience.
- We discuss with the applicant what employment he/she is looking for and find out any aim/objectives.
- The applicant must supply us with original certificates relating to any qualifications they state they have.
- Applicants must possess a childcare diploma, first aid course and a police conduct.
- We take contact details for at least two different referees covering at least the past two years – one of which must be a current or previous employer.
- We confirm with colleges/past employers that all qualifications/employment history given by the applicant is correct.
- As recruitment policy carers must first receive 300 hours training to familiarize oneself with the premises and children to start working at Stepping Stones.

It is the aim of Stepping Stones to provide the highest standard and ensure that we have the best staff possible for this. We believe that they are the most important resource in our Early learning centres. We are fortunate in having experienced and qualified staff, many whom have been with us for several years providing consistency of care.

The centre's coordinators have a level 5 childcare diploma, food handling and a first aid course. Our managing Director is a play therapist and has a psychology degree. Before staff is employed with Stepping Stones they have to sign the carer's policy sheet and adhere to work by those policies.

### **Child Carer's Policies**

- Carers report for work on time
- Carers are all qualified with a childcare diploma, first aid course and a clean police conduct.
- At the end of their duty carers do not leave children unless they are replaced by another carer and a proper handover is given.
- Carers must wear Stepping Stones' uniform during working hours.
- Carers do not leave children unattended unless another carer is informed about their absence and provided the other carer can supervise extra children
- Carers do not allow any person to pick children from the centre unless such person is authorized. Children will only be allowed to leave the childcare with the other persons with the prior permission of the parents.
- If a carer feels sick and decides to retire on sick leave, she is to ensure that before doing so a replacement is found.
- To preserve the wellbeing of children, carers who feel sick shall not report for work.
- Messaging and mobile calls are not allowed during working hours. Distractions shall be avoided.
- No person shall be allowed in the childcare centre unless he or she is a parent of any of the children attending Stepping Stones or his or her name is included in the list of names affixed to the front door of the centre.
- No smoking is allowed within the premises.
- Political, religious and any controversial discussions are avoided.
- Foul and abusive language, shouting, blasphemy and any type of language or conduct which is not suitable to be heard and seen by children are strictly prohibited.
- No corporal punishment of any kind whatsoever is tolerated.
- Children should be referred to by their proper names and any form of labeling is avoided.

- It is of outmost importance that carers must adhere to the rules of professional secrecy and confidentiality.
- Parents whose children attend Stepping Stones sign a consent form which allows carers to report any signs of child abuse. In such a case the Manager shall be informed immediately on her mobile (77210309).
- In case of any accident the carer must first try to contact ambulance on 112 and then inform the parents about the accident.
- As recruitment policy carers must first receive 300 hours training to familiarize oneself with the premises and children to start working at Stepping Stones.
- Staff needs to wear comfortable clean clothes, protective shoes, no jewellery and hair tied back.
- During summer holidays carers will be on a stop leave unless the centre informs about any shut down.

Needless to say, that the management of Stepping Stones Childcare centre strives to select the most professional carers. The childcare is never left unsupervised and therefore the manger or a supervisor will be present at all times. When the coordinators are away the supervisor will be present at all times and supervise other carers and report any irregularities to the Management.

### **Policies for students**

- Students must report on time for their placement.
- Attendance should be signed daily.
- Students must wear what is requested for their placement.
- Answering childcare centre calls or opening the main door is prohibited.
- Mobile phones should be kept in their personal bags and only used with permission.
- Must call sick one day before their placement.
- Political, religious and any controversial discussions should be avoided.
- Foul and abusive language or shouting is strictly prohibited.
- No corporal punishment of any kind towards children shall be tolerated.
- Students must come smart; hair tied up, no jewellery and no nails in the premises.

- Children should be refereed by their proper names and any form of labeling shall be avoided.
- Students must gain permission to do any activity with the children attending Stepping Stones.
- Discrimination of any kind with children should be strictly avoided.
- When the manager is not on site student must report everything to the supervisor.
- No smoking is allowed within the premises of the childcare centre.
- Students must never give food to children unless the food belongs to the child.
- Students must respect the confidentiality of the childcare centre and adhere to the rules of professional secrecy.
- Students must report to the manager any emergencies or any difficulties in their placement on 77210309.

## **12. Staff development**

- Staff is encouraged to engage in on-going training; to attend refresher courses in First Aid to maintain their certification and to attend seminars related to childcare at least once a year.
- The purpose of staff learning and development is to enable staff, individually and collectively, to enhance their knowledge, expertise and skills in order to enable them to fulfil their job role effectively and support progression. We encourage staff to self-reflect and identify their own development requirements and aspirations as well as being supported in this process by their manager.
- Every month we hold a staff meeting where carers have the opportunity to share new creative ideas, discuss difficult situations that they have encountered and we work on team building.

## **13. Staff Supervision**

- Adequate supervision entails that staff are aware of individual children's developmental stages and how this affects the way they interact with materials and

equipment. The manger conducts daily supervision with staff members to ensure that these needs are met.

- We provide professional development in supervision and behavior guidance for all staff members. This is done every Friday where carers have one hour of supervision in turns.
- During supervision the carers have the opportunity to discuss staff development, any anxieties and suggestions regarding their work in the centre.
- The room should be quiet and as free of distractions as far as possible.

#### **14. Staff records keeping**

The centre is committed to ensuring that a consistent system of record keeping is in place and sustained as the centre develops, to the benefit of both the centre and all members of staff.

##### **Procedures:**

15. Relevant details of all members of staff are held in confidence and therefore with access limited to only the Manager and the director and the individual themselves.
16. Details of all unsuccessful applicants for posts are held for a period of three months after the post is filled.
17. Once in post, staff details, appointed position and salary are kept by the Manager in the office.
18. Details of salary amendments are held by the Manager in the office.
- Records of individual members of staff are held for ten years after their departure.
19. Roasters, sick leave and leave papers are all treated with confidentiality and kept in the office.
20. Due care is taken to proceed in accordance with the Data Protection.

#### **15. Whistle blowing**

This policy is aimed to safeguard children from any type of abuse at the centre. Neglecting serious cases of abuse means neglecting one's professional duties. If any member of the staff notice any form of abuse which might be committed within the centre by any other staff member or student the staff member has the rightful duty to report the incident to the

Manager. Thus it is imperative that carers take the appropriate action when there is a strong probability of abuse. The staff may be assured that management will not take any action against any staff member reporting such instances of inappropriate behavior. Reports may be forwarded to the Department of Social Welfare Standards, 469, St. Joseph High Road, St. Venera, SVR1012, Malta. T:(356)22788000.

## **16. Complaints about the service**

Stepping Stones believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve Stepping Stones childcare centre and we even provide a suggestion box. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns.

- The parents pass his/her complaint to the Coordinator/Manager
- The complaint is discussed in privacy in the office.
- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome or if the problem recurs the complaint is manifested in writing to the manager and addressed to the director.
- If the complaint is not resolved the complaint will enter into a centre complaint form and a meeting is held with the parent, manager and the director.
- The director will take the final decision and the complaint is signed by all parties.

## **17. Equal opportunities and children with special needs**

At Stepping Stones we provide equal opportunities for all children regardless of their race, culture, religion, language or ability. Children of both sexes are positively encouraged to participate in all activities.

We positively welcome children and their families of all races, languages, beliefs and backgrounds and strive to provide all children with positive self-images and values and to help them feel included.

The Centre promotes positive recognition, understanding, knowledge and celebration of differences.

- Toys and equipment are chosen with the differing needs of the children in mind.
- Displays will show and reflect a positive image towards the world in which we live.
- Books are chosen to meet all the children's ages and abilities and to reflect the many differing lifestyles in society.
- Home corners will be changed regularly to show different cultures, races and the world around us.

We will ensure that the opportunities and activities in the learning environment are available to all children and their families.

It is our policy to positively value and respect people regardless of their gender, ethnic origins/racial groups, religions, cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Members of staff are employed because of their knowledge, qualifications and expertise and because they are considered to be the best person for the job.

We will, where possible, help children with disabilities to integrate into the Stepping Stones and will support their learning. At Stepping Stones children with special needs will be given extra help in areas of their development such as communication, physical skills, learning or behavior. Early identification is essential in order to support children and help them achieve within our early learning centre.

We aim to adapt our routine, activities and environment to allow all children to participate and reach their full potential. Through detailed planning and organization of resources, we aim to make all activities available to all children throughout the centre at a level appropriate to their developmental need. The centre is well structured to cater for persons with a physical disabilities and wheelchair users.

## **18. Data protection**

The Centre maintains confidentiality with all users of the service in line with the Data Protection Act. Any information and records concerning children or their families will only be shown to the appropriate authorities in this instance the Department for Social Welfare Standards, or in the case of suspected child abuse to the Child Protection Services. The use of photographs of the children will not be permitted without the expressed consent of the parents in the registration form.

