



How We Work with the Children Protocol

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Introduction

This document provides a brief outline of our ethos on play-care, as well as the practicalities involved in working with children. It might be useful to have the map of Gingerbread Corner handy when reading this, so that you can identify Gingerbread Corner's various areas.

All our activities must be in accordance with the OFSTED guidance which their Directorate uses to regulate providers, and on which they base their inspections.

Organisational Structure

Gingerbread Corner is a charity run by a voluntary Management Committee, which delegates operational matters to the three members of the Corner's Executive Management Team: the

Chief Executive, Child Care Director and Finance Director. The Senior Management Team includes the Project Managers. You can see all the members of staff, together with their job titles, on the Photo Boards in the Lobby and Out of School Landing, and further details about staff are available on our Website. Parents are encouraged to become more involved in Gingerbread Corner by becoming Company Members of the charity. A member of the Executive Management Team can provide more information.

Children's Admissions

It is important that we receive all the information we can about a child starting with us, and the first step is to ensure that the Admissions Form is correctly completed. A staff member must go through the form with the prospective parent, explaining why we need information and ensuring that the parent feels comfortable in telling us about their child's needs and requirements. Once the parent has completed and signed the Admissions Form, the Form should be passed to Admin for further action.

Settling In

EARLY YEARS

Early Years has a settling in procedure that normally consists of three days, although sometimes it is necessary for settling in to take a little longer.

The first day, between 9.30 – 11 a.m., provides the opportunity for parents/carers and children to form relationships with the staff and children and to see what sorts of activities their child will be doing. Parents are able to spend time in the Room observing how their child interacts with the other children and staff and can use the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. The Room Leader will run through the daily routine/planning systems and EYFS profile with the parent and discuss any additional requirements/dietary needs/allergies the child may have.

On Day Two, also between 9.30 – 11 a.m., parents/carers leave the Room once their child is confident enough, but remain within Gingerbread Corner. This gives the child the opportunity to explore their environment and build their confidence at their own rate, and to spend time interacting and playing with the other children and with staff. Should the child become distressed, staff will ask the parent/carer to return to the Room.

Day Three starts at 9.30 a.m. Once staff feel that the child has settled sufficiently and is happy, parents/carers normally may leave Gingerbread Corner, returning to collect their child after they have had their lunch, at 12.30 p.m. for Under 3s or 1 p.m. for pre-schoolers. Sometimes, it will be necessary however for parents/carers to remain within the building.

Each child has a key worker, who is responsible for the child's developmental records and reports (EYFS files). Key workers have more detailed knowledge of their key worker children so are probably the best person for parents to speak to should they have any concerns or questions they need support with. However, all our staff members are willing to help or advise.

OUT OF SCHOOL

In Out of School, on their first day, the child will be given a 'buddy', a child of a similar age who has similar interests, or someone that is familiar to them (such as a school friend or relative.)

The buddy will then help the child build new friendships, increase their confidence and get to know the different areas that are accessible to the child. A key worker is allocated to the child once they start to build a relationship with a particular member of staff, so that they feel comfortable asking any questions and feel able to go to them to discuss anything that is concerning them. The child's parent/carer is then notified and introduced to their child's key worker.

Health and Safety

Each staff member bears personal responsibility for Health and Safety and is required to read our Policy.

All accidents have to be recorded, examined by a qualified First Aider (see notice boards) and any serious accidents must be reported to a senior member of staff.

The fire doors must be kept clear at all times. In the event of the fire alarm sounding, everyone (including parents) must leave the building, assembling in the areas designated in the Fire Protocol Precautions and Procedures, where the children and staff registers are taken, and the Visitor Book checked. No-one is allowed to re-enter the building to search for any children or staff that may be unaccounted for.

The children are not allowed generally to touch the plugs or light switches; however in Out of School they may be given express permission in some cases, and the children are allowed to change the lighting in the Games Room and Little Dens.

Staff are not allowed hot drinks in any of the child care areas.

Staff may not leave the building without informing the most senior person on duty – this is to ensure that there is sufficient cover in case of fire or other emergency, and also, in the case of emergency, we are aware who should be in the building. This applies to outings, lunch-breaks and leaving the Corner after work.

No one is allowed to smoke at Gingerbread Corner or any other premises at which we are working (including outside areas) during open hours, with the following exception: smoking is allowed along the service drive as long as staff are extremely careful that children/ parents do not see them, so times when our families will be using the service drive must be avoided. Smoking is not allowed in Grenaby Avenue, Tavistock Square or Torrington Square, nor in the minibuses. Please see the Smoking, Substance Abuse & Alcohol Policy for further information.

In extreme adverse weather conditions, we may need to close Gingerbread Corner to ensure the safety of our staff and the families for whom we provide services. This decision, taken by the Executive Management Team, will not be taken lightly and every effort will be made to notify staff and parents by email, via the website, by phone calls and/or by text.

Telephone system

There is a telephone in every room, except for the Games, Romp and IT Rooms, the Little Den and the Quiet Room, with a display of extension numbers, so most communication between colleagues can be achieved via the phone system, meaning it is not usually necessary for staff to leave their rooms to give or receive messages.

The phone system should also be used to call for assistance whenever required or desired. Senior and admin staff will always help out to ensure effective staff cover in Early Years and in Out of School.

In an emergency or if you need to contact all staff, you can use the telephone intercom facility, which will allow your voice to be heard in each room that has a telephone. The telephone intercom is accessed by pressing the button marked "PAGE".

EMERGENCY INTERCOM PROTOCOL

- For any threat of violence or abduction, staff should say "Manager to [the appropriate area]"
- For any other emergency, staff should simply state their requirement, e.g. "Senior Staff/First Aider to [the appropriate area]."

ACCESS FROM THE OUTSIDE

When part of the building is in use by agencies or for training, etc., attendees will be asked to access the relevant room(s) via the service drive gate. They then use one of the four buttons on the back door to gain access to the correct room, where the phone will ring, as indicated on the labels. Visitors wanting to access services other than EY or OoS school should be directed to the appropriate entrance.

Children's Safety and Security

For guidance on Safeguarding and Child Protection, please see our Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidance.

As with any child-care centre, there is a risk of abduction, by a stranger or by a known person, such as an estranged parent. In the past, Gingerbread Corner has had one abduction attempt which was successfully foiled.

PERIMETER SECURITY

It is important to maintain the culture of security –staff must always be alert to the possibility of abduction. Remember, it is a lot easier to keep someone out of our secure areas than remove them once they are inside.

Our main entrance door is left unlocked, unless the Reception is unstaffed, in which case the door is locked (as is the glass Reception screen) and visitors must use the doorbell, which rings to all phones.

The **top** bolts of the gates from the Adventure Playground must be kept locked when the Adventure Playground is in use and unbolted as part of the tidying up procedure. All the other gates to the play areas must be securely fastened with bolts on the insides at the top and bottom at all times.

No-one must be allowed to enter the secure areas unless they are known to staff and/or have proper and adequate identification - this includes clients, friends/relatives of clients, people from maintenance or utility companies and so on. This is to reduce the risk of abduction either by a stranger or perhaps an estranged parent. "Strangers" must wait in the Front Lobby until a staff member has vouched for them.

Gingerbread Corner will absolutely support any staff member who denies entry to our secure areas because they believe the person shouldn't enter. Preventing them from entering whilst you go and check their credentials sometimes feels awkward, but experience shows that the vast majority of people will accept that the safety of all our children is paramount. However, should anyone wish to complain about their treatment, just give them a copy of our Complaints Procedure, and notify your Project Manager to expect a complaint.

If parents are concerned that their ex-partner may attempt to abduct their child, they must give us the name and a photograph of that person, one copy of which must be displayed on the inside wall of the Reception and one put on the Out of School Register Clipboard. In addition, each individual member of staff must be informed as a matter of urgency. In the event that someone answering that description comes to one of the front doors, the door must not be opened at all.

Parents must be asked not to allow anyone to come through the security doors behind them, unless their entrance has been authorised by staff.

When Robin Pre-School is operating, the middle corridor door must be kept locked to prevent the children being able to access out of bounds' areas and visitors, etc. being able to access the children.

Out of School children are not allowed downstairs unaccompanied unless the garden is open. Because the Front Door is generally unlocked, under no circumstances are Out of School children allowed in the Early Years' or Reception Lobbies alone. Staff must ring downstairs to check that a staff member will be there to receive any child that is being sent down.

The two staircase fire exits are alarmed. As long as no risk is posed to children in their direct care, staff should investigate if they hear the fire exit alarm sound; in particular, someone should leave by the front door so that they will be ahead of any child rather than following them.

SUSPICIOUS PERSONS

Outside the building:

Anyone seen hanging around outside Gingerbread Corner must be challenged, by a senior staff member if it is safe so to do, and/or reported to the police.

If you suspect someone is following a minibus when collecting from or delivering children to school or, even more importantly, if you have a concern about someone following the school walkers, the senior staff member present must use their initiative to reduce the risk. For example, the minibus could drive straight into a police station car park (South Norwood or Central Croydon are likely to be the nearest police stations); walkers should contact the Centre and/or the Police by mobile phone.

Inside the building:

If you see someone you don't know inside the building, you must challenge them, by saying for example "Can I help you?" If they don't give you an answer with which you are absolutely happy, you must immediately report their existence to a senior staff member. Senior staff must then decide what action to take; this may be just following up the challenge, or immediately calling the police – you must use your common sense, as it is not possible to cover every eventuality.

We would rather have 100 false alarms than one real incident.

PREVENTING AN ABDUCTION

You must not put yourself, another staff member or any child, at risk trying to prevent an abduction. That being understood, every attempt must be made to protect the endangered child. Again, every possible situation cannot be covered in this document, and staff may need to use their own initiative. However, the following guidelines may be of help:

1. The alarm should be raised immediately, by shouting for help and/or by using the emergency intercom protocol (laid out on page 5), and any staff not vitally required for child-care should respond to the call for help
2. The police must be contacted straight away by dialling 999. Don't leave calling the police to someone else – better for them to have five calls, rather than none.
3. If forced entry may be attempted or is made in one area, the at risk child should be quickly removed to a room which can be locked and which has no visibility, such as the Pooh Bear Room toilet or the staff room. Alternatively, one of the offices, which all have blinds, can be used when staff have the appropriate fob.
4. The parent must be contacted immediately.

If a parent has notified us that there is a danger of abduction, all staff must be told, a photo of the potential abductor put up in the reception office, on the back of the register clipboards both in Out of School and Early Years. Should the potential abductor come into the building (or be seen outside), the actions in Point 3 above should be followed.

RECORD-KEEPING

You should immediately make notes of anything you saw or heard, even if you don't think it can be connected. This includes details of any car involved and about the appearance of the abductor, which way they went, etc. and of anyone seen in the vicinity. A full record must be made of the incident as soon as possible, and a copy sent to OFSTED.

Ratios for Outings and Routes

The ratios for outings and routes are shown below.

	For local or single area outings	For unfamiliar or multi-area outings
On foot or in minibuses	1 adult: 3 children (0-4) 1 adult: 8 children (4+)	1 adult: 1 child (0-2) 1 adult: 2 children (2-4) 1 adult: 6 children (4-11)
By public transport	1 adult: 1 child (0-2) 1 adult: 2 children (2-4) 1 adult: 4 children (4-8) 1 adult: 6 children (9-11)	

Outings

Outings are great for the children, and Gingerbread Corner encourages staff to regularly take their children out, even if it's only to the local park or shop.

Children may only be taken on outings if the ratios are met.

It is vital that all staff remain alert to potential hazards and risks, from stranger-danger to traffic.

All trips are to be organised, usually well in advance, by the person the Manager has agreed to be the Outing Leader.

All the requirements in the Vehicular Safety Policy must be met.

The Project Manager or staff acting on their behalf must always check availability and suitability of destinations and parking/toilet facilities in advance.

OUTING LEADER

The Outing Leader is responsible for ensuring that all the children are assigned to staff, for setting the meeting places and times, and for regular headcounts.

Each morning, the list of children chosen to go each outing should be written in the Early Years' or Out of School's Outings' Duplicate Book. The Outings' Book stays at GBC, the duplicate copy is held by the Outing Leader and it is their responsibility to ensure that each child is checked into the bus or is with their assigned adult.

The information in the Outings' Book must include:

- Children's names
- Adults' names
- Number of children
- Date & destination of outing
- Expected time of return
- Number of the GBC mobile phone you have taken

The Outing Leader calls the children ticked on the Outings Register to go to the toilet, collect their coats, packed lunches etc., and then to make their way to the front door, from which they will leave the building. Children are not to be called until the outing is ready to go, so that they don't have to hang around, waiting and getting fidgety.

All the children going on an outing must be marked out of the Project's Register.

The Outing Leader is responsible for checking back each child to the bus/assigned adult, and then that they have come back into the building.

IDENTIFICATION

Each child must have a label stuck to their top/coat on which Gingerbread Corner and our phone number are written. Alternatively, each child will wear a sash with our details sewn onto it. Children's names must NOT be put on a badge, as a stranger would be better able to befriend a child if they could call out the child's name.

TIMING

Generally, "big" outings should leave the building at 10 a.m. and all outings should return to GBC by 4.00 p.m., unless arranged otherwise by the Project Manager, in which case the

parents must have been informed the day before, by poster, text, email or in person.

SUPERVISION

Each staff member must take responsibility for a certain group of children (related to the ratios set out above).

Students and volunteers may only ever be given responsibility for one child. Any clients accompanying the outing may have responsibility only for their own child/ren.

Regarding going to the toilet, ideally, children should be taken in groups into the toilet by staff. If there are no staff of the appropriate gender present, then staff must wait right outside the toilet to ensure the child/ren's safety.

FOOD, DRINK & EQUIPMENT

For staff who pay for their lunches, GBC will normally supply a packed lunch or, if necessary, pay up to £5 for each staff member's lunch (as long as a receipt is provided). Bottled water should be taken where appropriate.

The Outing Leader must ensure that their project's Outings' Bag has sufficient materials, sports equipment, etc., as well as the equipment listed below.

The Outings' Bags are kept in the Laundry Room and should always be taken, regardless of the size of the outing.

CONTENTS OF OUTINGS' BAGS

- Accident Book
- Antibacterial wipes and baby wipes
- Asthma pumps/inhalers and any other medication
- Copy of this Section of this Protocol
- Drinks & cups
- First aid information book
- Mobile phone (kept in the Admin Office)
- Tissues
- First aid kit (including sterilised water)
- Nappies/nappy bags & spare clothes (for Early Years)
- Calpol & medicine syringe/spoon (for Early Years)
- Sun cream (if appropriate)
- Sun hats (if appropriate)

The Outing Leader must ensure that any items used are replaced immediately upon return to Gingerbread Corner.

STAFF BREAKS

Our prime responsibility on outings is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children, and our outings' staff:children ratio is set with that in mind. This means that staff may not take tea, coffee, cigarette or any other breaks during the outing. The Outing Leader should ensure

that there is sufficient time for the staff to have half-an-hour to eat their lunch with the children.

INFORMING PARENTS

Parents give their consent to their child going on outings when they sign their admission form.

Small, local outings – if possible, parents should be informed if their child is going on an outing when they drop their child off in the morning. If this is not possible (i.e. the outing is arranged at short notice) parents should be informed in the evening when they collect their child.

Large outings – (i.e. all day) parents must be informed in advance by letter and a poster should be put on the front door the day before to remind parents to dress their child in suitable clothes. Parents can be invited along to the outing and, the more notice we give them, the more likely they are to be able to come.

HOT/COLD WEATHER

In hot/wet/cold weather, outings should only be organised if there is adequate shade/shelter.

All children should have sun cream applied regularly and under-fives should always wear a hat.

The children should not be exposed to direct sunlight for more than 30 minutes.

In cold weather children should be dressed appropriately and the outing should be of limited duration.

MISSING CHILD

If a child seems to be missing, the Outing Leader should quickly establish the accuracy of the "child missing" report, e.g. or could they have been left at Gingerbread Corner, have they gone off because they have been reprimanded, did anyone see them being taken away by an adult?

If the child cannot immediately be found, the Outing Leader must designate at least one person to stay with the other children, ideally getting all the other children back into a minibus as this will minimise any risk to them.

They should then delegate one staff member to telephone the police and Gingerbread Corner (who will contact the parent), while any other staff members continue to search for the child.

Unless instructed otherwise by senior staff at Gingerbread Corner, the outing should stay on site, liaising with the emergency services and keeping Gingerbread Corner informed, until their planned home time so that they maximise the chances of coming home with all the children.

PHOTOGRAPHS & FILMING

Recordings of significant events in children's lives are valuable to us and to our families. Once missed, they are lost forever, so Gingerbread Corner often takes photographs (where the parents have given permission) of the children to give to parents, to display on our notice boards, to put in scrap books, on our website/Facebook site and in the Annual Report, and for use in promotional leaflets. Whatever cameras staff use to take the photos, they must immediately download all electronic images to the Z drive (asking for IT help if necessary), and the images deleted from the cameras. Staff keeping images outwith this protocol will be

subject to disciplinary action. Gingerbread Corner also produces a DVD of the children at play for parents to buy, which we normally preview at our Annual General Meeting.

Photos may be kept on the Rooms' tablets.

Staff may not usually use their own cameras or phones to take photos of the children. On rare occasions, they may be granted permission by a senior staff member in which case they would have to adhere to the requirement laid out in the paragraph above, and the manager would ensure that any photos were deleted.

All photos of the children must adhere to general standards of decency.

Photos uploaded to Tapestry must not contain images of other children - if necessary, the images of any other children can be edited out or their faces rendered unrecognisable.

Out of School was one of the first latch key schemes in Europe, and Gingerbread Corner is recognised throughout the UK for their child care projects, which provide good quality, innovative care for a uniquely wide range of ages. For this reason, Gingerbread Corner is approached from time to time by television companies and newspapers for interviews, photographs and/or film of the children.

Parents are asked, on their Admission Form, if they consent to their child being photographed or filmed for any of the above purposes, and the Form is flagged for any child who is not allowed to be photographed or filmed.

Parents may take their own photographs/film of events, from snaps of their child's birthday party to recording one of the children's performances.

CHILDREN WHO ARE ABSENT WITHOUT INFORMATION

The Project Managers will contact the parents of any children absent without explanation by their fourth day of absence. This is to ensure the safety of the children, to indicate that we are interested in the family's well-being and to make sure that the family has not left without notice.

Equal Opportunities

Our staff are highly committed to equal opportunities/diversity issues and are expected to have read and understood Gingerbread Corner's Equal Opportunities Policy. (See other documents such as the Early Years' Special Educational Needs Policy).

Gingerbread Corner staff must support the children in developing the necessary skills to combat prejudice and the abuse of power.

Even young children are influenced by ideas and attitudes which perpetuate prejudices. Black and minority ethnic children may feel excluded, rejected, angry, ashamed of their colour, their language and/or their way of life. Being constantly presented with a generally "white" world, they may find it more difficult to establish their own identity and self-esteem.

If children see racist or sexist remarks and attitudes going unchallenged they are more likely to develop insensitive, uncaring attitudes themselves. At Gingerbread Corner, we make sure we practice anti-racist child-care so that no child, of whatever ethnicity, is damaged by racist

behaviour.

Gingerbread Corner ensures that games and puzzles, dressing up clothes and dolls, etc. fully reflect an anti-racist approach and that themes and artwork reflect the ethnicity of the children attending our child-care schemes, and of the community. Staff take care to give positive responses to patois and other languages.

We ensure that food of other cultures and countries are reflected in our menus. Celebrating and learning about different festivals are essential because, the more we know about each other's culture/race, etc, the less we will be divided by racism. Racism must be recognised, challenged and eliminated. Each child's motivation must be encouraged by ensuring they feel fully included, personally, racially and culturally.

Gingerbread Corner also ensures that games and activities do not reflect society's stereotyping of gender roles. For example, books and puzzles should not exclusively show mummies in the home and daddies working outside the home.

Activities, games and sports must be anti-sexist. Staff must ensure that, for example, girls don't feel excluded from computer games or playing cricket and that boys are encouraged to take part in cooking activities; boys will do washing up and be allowed in the home corner, etc; girls will play in the Romp Room and the Adventure Playground even if they get grubby. Time must be taken to explain our reasoning to any parent who is concerned about their child's activities.

Staff are expected to be careful about the messages we might unconsciously transmit if, for example, we ask a boy to help lift something, or a girl to take care of a younger child. Boys should be encouraged to express their feelings, just the same as girls.

Similarly, we ensure that people with additional needs are not discriminated against – directly or indirectly, and our resources and activities reflect the different needs and abilities that people may have.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Gingerbread Corner believes that segregation of children with special needs is a devaluation of those children and of others, just as would be the case regarding exclusion on the basis of gender, class or race, etc.

All children have equal status and equal rights to appropriate support and to access to play-care facilities. If children are used to being in integrated groups, then there is less ignorance and fear that would otherwise prevent the acceptance of people with disabilities/ learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviour.

Gingerbread Corner staff are given support and training to work effectively with children with disabilities, e.g. sign language, Makaton, physical care, help with behavioural difficulties, and so on.

Children with special needs may need more support regarding acceptable behaviours. For example, behaviour which would be unacceptable in a child without a learning disability may not warrant punishment for a child with a learning disability or behavioural difficulties.

POSITIVE IMAGES

Gingerbread Corner provides positive images. For example:

- Pictures, posters, photographs, etc. reflect positive images of minority groups living happy and successful lives.
- We continue to move away from the images of black people as athletes, entertainers, famine victims, etc.
- Children need to see men in caring roles, and women in career situations.
- We make sure that we don't portray people with disabilities as deserving pity - or as heroes.

Questions about physical/cultural differences are answered honestly, not ignored or side-stepped.

Key-Workers

All the children have a keyworker. In Early Years, keyworkers are responsible for the children's developmental records and reports etc. In Out of School, each keyworker is responsible for a small group of children, with whom they have monthly meetings. In all cases, the Project Manager allocates the keyworker (and informs the parent) within the first day or two of the child's attendance, if not before they start. In Out of School, the keyworker groups are displayed in the corridor.

Menus/Dietary Requirements

The vast majority of our food is home-made, with the eggs free range. We work to rolling seasonal menus, aiming to source our supplies from as close by as possible. Gingerbread Corner makes every effort to accommodate all genuine dietary needs. Everyone preparing, handling or serving food, or sitting with children who are eating, must wear a hat or hairnet at all times.

Child-Care and Kitchen Staff are notified of any dietary requirements/allergies the child may have by the appropriate Project Manager.

Materials & Equipment Storage

Equipment and resources are stored as follows:

Resources for the Rooms are kept within the Rooms, apart from outside equipment and excess resources which are stored in the outside sheds. For stationery, tissues and cleaning materials, etc., the appropriate person must be asked.

Late Collections

For Out of School and Early Years, all children must be collected by 6.30 p.m. Any parents collecting after 6.35 p.m. will be "fined" for any late collections and their child's place may be withdrawn if they are late more than four times.

If the parent has not arrived by 6.45 p.m., we will attempt first to get in touch with the parent and then with the emergency contacts. If no-one can be reached to collect the child, the senior staff member present will telephone the duty social worker to arrange care for the child. Social Services would normally be telephoned by 7.30 p.m. but this is at the discretion of the senior staff member.

For Robin Pre-School, all children must be collected by 12.30 p.m. Otherwise, parents are “fined” for any late collections and their child’s place may be withdrawn if they are late more than four times. If the parent has not arrived by 12.45 p.m., we will attempt first to get in touch with the parent and then with the emergency contacts. If no-one can be reached to collect the child, the senior staff member present will telephone the duty social worker to arrange care for the child. Social Services would normally be telephoned by 1.30 p.m. but this is at the discretion of the senior staff member.

Staff Children

Gingerbread Corner staff are encouraged to have their children attend our projects. However, sometimes this could cause difficulties to the parent or child, and/or to other staff, and these guidelines are designed to prevent any problems occurring. Generally speaking, staff parents should not be treated any differently than any other parent.

Our Early Years’ children are not able to separate their parents’ primary role as a parent from their role as a Gingerbread Corner staff member. Therefore, it is Gingerbread Corner’s policy that Early Years staff should not habitually work in the same Room as their child.

Although children over five can start to make this distinction, we should bear in mind that the younger Out of School children in particular may have difficulties from time to time.

Staff parents need to bear in mind that their children will be disciplined from time to time and that they must not interfere in any way. Rather, they should encourage their children to respect all Gingerbread Corner staff members.

Staff parents may also wish to bear in mind that their children could experience a “double jeopardy” situation because their parent may be aware of some unacceptable behaviour about which our clients normally would not know. These children probably don’t need to be told off twice, once by staff and then by their parent!

Discipline & Respect

There is no question of anyone physically punishing or being verbally abusive to children at Gingerbread Corner. Staff follow Gingerbread Corner’s Behaviour Management Plan, which includes Time Out (and parents can be supported to use the Plan at home). Children who misbehave are generally given Time Out (one minute for each year of the child’s life). Another disciplinary measure is banning from an activity or area for a limited period of time, the length of time depending on the misbehaviour.

Gingerbread Corner is committed to working with all our children and exclusion or withdrawal of a child’s place is a last resort, which we may need to take bearing in mind our duty of care to the other children and to our staff.

Unless agreed with the parent otherwise by the Child Care Director, we do not report all the children's transgressions to them. The parents and their children need to feel good about seeing each other after a long day. Any major problems should be discussed with the parent in private and only by a senior staff member. On no account are parents greeted with complaints about their child's behaviour.

Parents may not discipline other people's children in any way.

There are few rules that the children must follow, but we do expect these to be kept to, including encouraging children to look after each other, reporting any bullying and helping an upset child. Behaviour such as hitting, spitting, kicking, etc. is unacceptable. Bullying and harassment are unacceptable, and are not tolerated. The Executive Management Team needs to be made immediately aware of any bullying or harassment issues or allegations of bigoted behaviour.

The children are expected to show respect for the staff, volunteers, each other, our resources and equipment and our building. We expect staff and volunteers to respect the children's wishes, rights and abilities, regardless of their age, race, ability or disability, size, etc. We aim always to provide positive role models for the children.

We trust the children to behave responsibly and well, and they must be able to trust us to treat any breaches of our rules fairly and equitably.

Outside Play

The Outside areas comprise the Adventure Playground (which includes the turfed area), the Undercover Playground, Sunshine Courtyard and Early Years' Gardens.

The Outside areas are always checked, using the appropriate Log, before children are allowed out to play.

The children are not allowed outside before 10.00 a.m. and between 1 - 2 p.m. to give our neighbours a break! When the sun is strong, the Early Years children must be inside or under cover between 11 - 3 p.m. Sometimes, the children are allowed to play outside once it gets dark.

Children and staff must be suitably dressed for being outside, and sun cream must be applied to all children whenever the sun is strong (and staff must ensure they also use sunscreen). Water should be readily available, to avoid any risk of dehydration.

Sand should be covered whenever staff close the garden and, at the end of the day, playgrounds are cleared of all toys, litter, etc.

Children are never allowed to throw stones, bits of wood, sand or bark chips - any child doing this will be banned from the garden for at least the rest of the day. Stone throwing must always be brought to the attention of senior staff. The children should not be allowed to scream and shout, for the sake of our neighbours.

Staff are expected to use their common sense about outside play – for example, if there is a swarm of wasps, the children must be brought indoors immediately. Similarly, if items are being thrown into any of the Playgrounds from outside – any such objects are left where they landed and a senior member of staff immediately informed, who may decide to call the police.

The Adventure Playground is for use by children aged 3 and over. The grassed area may be used for ball games, such as cricket.

Before Early Years' children use the Adventure Playground or Undercover Playground, a member of staff must ensure that our Director of IT and Facilities is aware that he needs to keep the doors to the Portakabins locked. This is to ensure that the children cannot access the tools and equipment stored in there.

Sensory Room

The Sensory Room is specifically aimed at children under eights, those with additional needs and older children who need a chill out zone, and is supervised all the time it is in use.

No food nor drink may be taken into the Sensory room, and shoes must be taken off and put in the shoe holder.

Each Early Years' Room is allocated daily slots of ten minutes between 10.10-11.10 a.m. and Robin Pre-School between 12 – 12.20 p.m. Out of School can use the Room on a regular basis for younger children or those with additional needs. Older children may only be taken to the Sensory Room if they need to calm down - not if they have already lost their temper, as this activity should not be seen as a reward for inappropriate behaviour.

The guidelines for the number of children allowed in the Sensory Room at one time is as follows:

Under 2s:	3
2- 5s:	4
Over 6s:	3
For chilling out	one child at a time

Staff should ensure that the fibre-optic lights are untangled, the room left clean and tidy and all the switches turned off at the end of every session.

Early Years

OPENING HOURS

The Early Years is open from 7.45 - 6.30 p.m., every week day (except Bank Holidays), 52 weeks a year, providing care for 82 children.

MEALS

The children, who are aged between 3 months and five years, have breakfast up to 8.30 a.m., lunch at 11.30 and snack at 3 p.m.

Breakfast, Lunch and Afternoon Snack are prepared by the cooks, and served in the rooms by the Early Years staff.

STAFF ROTA

The staff rota comprises three usual shifts (Early: 7.45 a.m.–4.15 p.m., Late: 9.30 a.m.–6p.m. and Late-late: 10 a.m. – 6.30 p.m.)

EARLY YEARS' ROOMS

The Early Years' children are divided by age groups, as in the Table below, which also shows the staff:child ratios.

Tiggers	children up to two years	1 staff member to 3 children
Pooh Bears	children aged two – three years	1 staff member to 4 children
Owls and Kangas	children aged three +	1 staff member to 8 children

Each Room has a Room Leader who supervises the other Room staff. Tiggers and Pooh Bears also have an Assistant Room Leader post.

Generally, in the mornings, the children go into their usual Rooms. Occasionally, the Rooms may join up after 6 p.m., if there is a shortage of staff and/or there are only a few children.

Each Room keeps its own register, where the children are marked in when they arrive and marked out when they leave the Room.

ACTIVITIES

Pooh Bears and Tiggers complete their planning on weekly basis and Owl and Kanga staff have medium term planning of four-six weeks. All staff work within the guidance of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and each child has a key-worker, who is responsible for their developmental records and reports.

We provide many activities, grouped under the three Prime areas of development: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, and Communication and Language. In addition to the Prime areas, the children aged three or over also have Literacy, Maths, Art and Design and Understanding the World.

Staff set up resources/equipment to extend the children's development in accordance with their Room's weekly planning.

During term time, Early Years children are able to use the facilities on the first floor, e.g. the Hall, Romp Room, Play Deck, except when Robin Preschool is running (9.30-12.30 p.m. each day). When using the stairs, staff must ensure that there are no more than two children to each member of staff, so that children using the stairs are adequately supported. If this ratio is not met, then the lift should be used, with all due care.

Dependent on each child's development, the children under three do not usually use computers. Our preschoolers have access to computer time throughout the day. Each child is allocated a 15 minute session controlled by a timer.

SUPERVISION

The Rooms and play areas are always supervised and the children must not leave their room unless accompanied by staff or their parent/carer.

Babies or small children being changed on the changing mats must never be left unattended, even for a few seconds. When reaching for baby wipes, nappy bags, etc. staff are required to ensure they keep one hand on the baby, and that they do not turn away from the baby at any time, so that there is no risk of the baby rolling off the mat.

Staff must gain permission from their Room Leader if they need to leave their Room for any reason, as well as ensuring that they inform their co-workers.

Exceptions to the above requirements may be made in limited circumstances, such as when the children are sleeping or resting. In these circumstances all the adults need not be present in the room with the children, but should be available nearby on the premises should they be needed.

EARLY YEARS' OUTSIDE PLAY

Covered Play Area

Tiggers have a designated area for their use only. Owls and Kangas share their undercover area. Pooh Bears have access to the outside but this is not a covered area.

The Covered Play Area provides a 'free flow' space for our children during all weathers, and is set up with planned activities (e.g. sand, water, role play equipment) to extend the children's learning.

Please see the detailed Table at the end of this document for staffing ratios, etc. for the Covered Play Areas.

Access to the gates must never be blocked by equipment, and staff must ensure that there is a clear pathway to both gates in case of an emergency evacuation. Two evacuation trolleys are kept in the Covered Play Area unless it is in use, in which case they are moved against the fence in the covered walkway just outside the back gate.

Garden

The Garden is used for Directed and Free Play. All the age groups have equal access to the Garden, with a daily time slot allocated to each Room. Activities are set up outside, and staff must position themselves so that all areas can be supervised.

The Garden requires continuous supervision, of at least one staff member at all times.

When accessing either of the above areas; covered play or garden, a garden check must be completed and any dangers removed before the children are allowed to use it.

If a child is injured, one staff member takes them inside to a trained first aider. If they are not back within five minutes, the Playground might have to be closed if there would be insufficient staff to safely supervise the children.

Robins' Pre-School

Robin Pre-School comes under our Early Years' umbrella and runs Monday – Fridays during term-times, from 9.30 – 12.30 p.m.

The staffing ratio, planning rota, etc. are similar to those for Owls and Kangas as indicated above. Robin Pre-School is based in the Hall, and has the use of other Out of School areas, such as the Deck, Romp Room, IT Room.

Out of School

Supervision

We do not closely supervise every room or area in Out of School at all times, although there are some areas which must have constant supervision as shown in the Room by Room Appendix. Where a number is given against staff supervision, this is a minimum.

The Ofsted staffing requirements are one staff member to 8 children for 3-8 year olds. We work to a staffing ratio of 1:10 across all the Out of School age range.

Afterschool Activities and Permission to walk home

It is becoming more and more frequent that some of our children will start to participate in afterschool activities. To ensure that we are aware of which days we are supposed to collect the child, staff need to get the parent to inform us in writing. In addition Gingerbread Corner staff must ensure that the parent is fully aware that we will NOT be returning to the school to collect their child once the activity has finished and they will need to make other arrangements on how they will get their child to us.

Some parents will request that their child can start making their own way home from Gingerbread Corner. Again we will require this in writing. Some parents will give a 'blanket cover' permission letter stating that they will call and instruct that their child can now leave us for the day. Staff who take this call must make a note on the white board inside the Health Room so that everyone is aware, unless the parent is calling to say the child must leave straight away, in which case the member of staff who takes the phone call will be solely responsible for ensuring the child leaves on time.

Breakfast Club

Before school, up to 25 children arrive from 7.45 a.m. onwards, and marked in on the register. The children are given breakfast as long as they arrive before 8.15 a.m. We give them toast or cereal if they have not already had breakfast, and then deliver them to their schools.

At 7.45, staff set up the tables in the hall, putting out bowls, spoons, cereals, yoghurts and a variety of spreads. At 7.50, a member of staff sets up activities in the Games Room and toast is sent up from the kitchen, whereupon the children help themselves to breakfast. At 8.20, staff call all the children, to collect their belongings and form a line, and then escort them to their minibus or, in a crocodile, straight to school using the back stairwell.

Some children may be walked to Broadmead. We normally have three escorts and one staff member on the register; the register person also covers reception by answering the phone from the Health Room and letting Early Years' parents through.

If children arrive after 8.30 a.m., unfortunately, their parent will need to take them to school themselves because the register will already have been marked out and it is vital that our records are accurate.

Term-Time

We are registered to collect 100 children from their schools. Most are collected in one of our four minibuses, although some children are walked from Broadmead and St Mary's schools. When the children arrive at Gingerbread Corner, they are marked in the register, after which they will have snack (usually in the Hall) and are then free to pursue whichever activity they choose. The children are marked out on the register when they leave the building.

If there is any doubt as to whether we should collect the child from school, we will always bring them to the safety of our facilities rather than leave them outside a school.

The minibuses start to leave at around 2.45 p.m. Some of the minibus runs involve dropping children back to Gingerbread Corner, and then going out again. Other minibus routes are out for approximately an hour.

Our kitchen staff prepare snacks, most of which are home-made snacks.

Minibus Routes

Please see the Section on Vehicular Safety & Responsibilities, and Route Management.

School Holidays

We have additional children come to Out of School in the school holidays and we employ a number of casual staff to supplement the permanent staff.

Breakfast is served until 8.25 a.m. and the children eat their packed lunches at around 12.30 p.m. Afternoon snack is served around 3 p.m. During school holidays, staff generally take their lunch breaks between 12.30 - 3 p.m.

Children are marked in the register when they arrive and when they leave. The register is called at lunchtime as a double check.

Inset Days

Gingerbread Corner also provides cover for Inset Days (the occasional training days that schools have), and the school holiday rules above apply for these days. However, depending on the number of children attending, casual staff may not be employed. There is a no additional cost to parents for Inset Days.

Age Groups

The children are divided into age groups to make it easier to organise play areas, snack and other occasions where small groups of children are needed. The groups are as follows: RABBITS 4-5 years; KOALAS 6 years; BADGERS 7 years; PANTHERS 8-9 years; MONKEYS 10-11 years.

Staff Rota

The staff follow a rota which ensures you spend time in different areas. The children are encouraged to take part in everything, and are free to move from room to room (unless they are needed to tidy away a particular activity first!).

Restricted Areas

The children are not allowed into the offices without permission. Children are not allowed to play in any areas other than designated play areas.

Crèches

All rooms and play areas must always be continuously supervised and the children must not leave their room unaccompanied.

The amount of staff allocated will be, where possible, based on our existing ratios; 1:3 for three months - two years, 1:4 for two – three years and 1:8 for 3 - 8 years.

Staff need to ensure that any activity provided is age appropriate, e.g. making sure that there are no small pieces of equipment out that a younger child may put in their mouth, even when older children may also be present.

All GBC's normal rules for working with children will apply.

Positive Play

Much of the above seems to be a long list of things the children cannot do! Whilst negative behaviour must be discouraged, staff also need to promote positive behaviour.

The rules do in fact enable the children to play freely and safely, and allow us to accommodate the children's play needs and help them initiate and realise their own ideas.

And, finally

We hope these guidelines have not overwhelmed you! Please feel free to ask us about anything you would like clarified.

ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND: OUR MAIN TASKS AT GINGERBREAD CORNER ARE TO ENSURE THAT THE CHILDREN ARE HAPPY, SAFE AND SECURE, AND THAT THEIR PARENTS ARE CONFIDENT WHEN THEY LEAVE THEM IN OUR CARE.

Room by Room & Area by Area

In each case, the number of staff shown as supervising is the minimum requirement.

OUT OF SCHOOL

Games Room	Light Supervision by the Playleader minimum	Free play
	Access to the books and board games etc. is child-directed. There should be no more than 10 children in the Games Room.	
IT Room	Continuous Supervision by one staff member	Free Play

	<p>No food or drink may be taken in when the Room is open for children. There should normally be only one child per PC.</p> <p>The children are not allowed to go on any websites outside the PlayWeb. Staff should encourage children to use the PCs for writing stories, etc. Xbox games can be watched by several children, sitting on chairs</p> <p>The children use the IT Room in 15/20 minute sessions, with children being able to add their names to the “waiting list” for subsequent sessions.</p> <p>Staff must carefully supervise this Room, helping the children and monitoring the sites they are on, etc.</p> <p>Staff must complete the IT Room Log.</p> <p>At the end of the session, the Room must be absolutely tidy and clear. Any problems with the equipment must be reported to the IT Officer immediately.</p>	
Rainbow Room	Continuous Supervision by one staff member	Directed &/or Free Play
	<p>Used for such activities as woodwork, papier maché, clay, junk modelling, painting and enamelling and must be supervised at all times by a member of staff or an experienced casual staff member. Depending on the activity, the maximum number of children at one session should be no more than ten and may need to be less.</p> <p>The children must always wear shoes and overalls in the room. Masks and goggles should be worn for some activities, for example, sanding pottery or plaster or for carving from breeze/celcon blocks, and goggles must be worn for candle-making and for batik work.</p> <p>The children are not allowed to use power tools, Stanley knives etc., and must be watched particularly carefully when they are using tools of any kind.</p> <p>Activities such as woodworking can cause injury but also encourage and extend play opportunities, so the age and ability of children must be carefully considered.</p> <p>It is a Health and Safety requirement that the Rainbow Room is cleared up after each session, the paint pots, brushes, etc. cleaned and put away, and the floor swept and washed, depending upon the activity. In addition, shelves and work surfaces will be deep cleaned on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Clay must be dried away from the children.</p>	
Lounge	Continuous Supervision by one staff member	Directed &/or Free Play
	<p>Consists of construction and role play areas, as well as the use of a pool table and sand/water play. The children will participate in free play and adult led activities.</p>	
Hall	Continuous Supervision by one staff member	Directed &/or Free Play
	<p>Used for snack, and for lunches in the holidays. Otherwise, used for organised games, indoor sport, giant craft activities, drama and floor play, and also for unstructured play.</p> <p>The children must not sit or climb on the stacked chairs or sit/clamber on the tables. Hard balls must not be used in the Hall, or anywhere else in the building, as they can hit and shatter the lights/ windows. Only foam balls may be used inside.</p> <p>When involved in a cooking activity or assisting to serve snack, children must wash their hands thoroughly and wear aprons. Children should stand around the table and are not allowed to sit down. Children should be encouraged to clear up all utensils and equipment that have been</p>	

	used. The Hall is also used for Robin Pre-school – see under Early Years for full information.	
Romp Room	Continuous Supervision by one staff member	Free Play
	<p>The Romp Room is a soft play room on two levels and must always be supervised.</p> <p>A staff member needs to watch the children at all times from the carpeted area, although if there are two staff members, one can be playing with the children. Adults must not sit on the musical sound steps or the Ball Pool wall. No chairs may be taken in. Shoes are left in the cubby holes just inside the Romp Room.</p> <p>Staff must pay particular attention to children using the platforms to climb up and down from the mezzanine area, to ensure there are no issues with congestion and unnecessary injuries caused by the children’s feet. Time on the ‘Spinner’ should be limited to avoid sickness.</p> <p>Volunteers and inexperienced staff are not allowed to supervise this area alone.</p> <p>In an emergency, the Romp Room knife could be used to cut through the netting. The knife (commonly referred to as “the tool”) is kept in the minibus key safe in the locker room, should it be required in an emergency to cut the netting.</p> <p>The children are generally invited to play in the Romp Room in their age groups. The Romp Room is not suitable for children over 11 years.</p> <p>When the under-fives use the Romp Room, at least two staff members provide the supervision for a maximum of 8 children. If children are using the upper level, then a staff member needs to be positioned up there also. The session should last no longer than 20 minutes. Early Years will be able to use the Romp Room two days a week from 10–11.15 a.m. Out of School children’s sessions should last 15 minutes, with a maximum of 6 children at any one time. The “cut out shapes” must be removed, as the older children may not play with them.</p> <p>The children may not throw balls out of the ball pool, climb the netting, nor scream or shout. No food or drinks are allowed in the Room.</p> <p>The Ball Pool balls must be cleaned at least every quarter and as necessary by staff. The balls must be at a height of 450-600 mm.</p> <p>Any damage must be reported immediately to the Director of IT and Facilities.</p>	
Little Den	Continuous supervision by one staff member	Free Play
	<p>Only for children aged seven and under, and is used for Dressing Up, Role Play or Small World.</p> <p>The staff member will interact with the children’s play, whilst ensuring they do not dominate the play. Inexperienced staff can supervise this area.</p>	
Decking	Continuous supervision by one staff member	Free Play
	<p>Volunteers and inexperienced staff cannot supervise this area on their own. For Health and Safety reasons no ball games are allowed in this area and staff need to ensure that any tables and chairs are not placed up against the railings encouraging climbing. Staff must ensure that the Play Terrace is cleared at the end of each day.</p> <p>The Terrace becomes extremely slippery in icy and wet weather and must not be used at those times.</p>	
Undercover	Continuous supervision by one staff member	Directed &/or Free Play

Area	An area for organised play activity, such as football, skipping, and other playground games. Children must not be allowed to swing or climb on the bracings or flower containers, for their own safety. Staff members covering this area are to keep a watchful eye.	
Adventure Playground	Continuous supervision by two staff members	Directed &/or Free Play
	<p>This area must always be carefully supervised and may need a higher staff ratio depending on number of children outside and what activity is taking place. One of the members of staff should be a first aider, if possible. Only experienced staff will be authorised to open the Adventure Playground.</p> <p>Children may not play tag (it) on the structure.</p> <p>If a child is injured, they should be taken to the Health Room.</p> <p>The bark (20-80mm) or wood (0.2-2mm) chips must be at a depth of at least 300mm (with a maximum fall height of 3000mm), and should be raked/replaced regularly and as necessary.</p>	

SENSORY ROOM

	Continuous supervision by one staff member	Free Play
	<p>Food, drink and shoes are not allowed in this room.</p> <p>The fibre optic lights should be untangled and the room left clean and tidy at the end of each session. Any faults or damage must be reported immediately to the Director of IT and Facilities</p>	

EARLY YEARS

Tigger Room	Continuous supervision by two staff members	Directed and Free Play
	<p>The Room Leader or Assistant Room Leader will ensure that there are at least two members of staff in the room at all times. Volunteers and inexperienced staff cannot supervise this area on their own.</p> <p>This is divided into two sections; one section for under 1s and the second section for over ones (the crawlers and walkers).</p> <p>The under ones' area is set up with cushions, rugs, "touchy feely" resources, and equipment to aid a child's physical development and encourage their opportunity of learning.</p> <p>The over ones' section is divided into areas: quiet/ book corner, home corner/ role play, physical development, construction/ small world and creative.</p>	
Tigger Covered Play Area	Continuous supervision by one staff member	Directed and Free Play
	<p>Tigger Room has its own section of the paved area which will be sectioned off by a picket fence with a gate to the Garden.</p> <p>Staff set up resources/ equipment to extend the children's development in areas such as creative, role play and physical development.</p>	
Pooh Bear (PB) Room	Continuous supervision by two members of staff	Directed and Free Play
	<p>Pooh Bear Room is divided into seven areas; personal development, maths, communication and language, literacy, physical, understanding of the world and expressive arts.</p>	
PB Covered Area	Continuous supervision by one member of staff	Directed and Free Play

	The paved area is set up as an extension of the room, linking to the children's individual learning plans/next steps.	
Owl & Kanga (O & K) Rooms	In each room, continuous supervision by one member of staff*	Directed and Free Play
	Owl and Kanga Rooms are divided into seven areas; personal development, maths, communication and language, literacy, physical, understanding of the world and expressive arts.	
O & K's Covered Area	In each room, continuous supervision by one member of staff*	Directed and Free Play
	The paved area will be set up as an extension of the room's creative area, providing sand and water play, painting/drawing easel linking to the children's individual learning plans/ next steps.	
Robin Pre-School	Continuous supervision by one member of staff in the Hall.	Directed and Free Play
	Whilst Robin Pre-School is open, the Hall is divided into seven areas; creative, role play/ dressing up, construction, small world, book/quiet corner, mathematics, language and literacy and ICT. The Robin Pre-School also has the use of other Out of School areas, such as the Deck, Romp Room, IT Room with the appropriate staffing levels.	

SCREEN TIME	
Under Twos	Tiggers are not allowed access to computers, tablets, etc.
Two to Five Year Olds	Over-twos have no more than 10-15 minutes screen time each throughout the day
Three-Five Year Olds	Over-threes may have a maximum of 15 minutes' group screen time

CRÈCHE

	Continuous supervision by one member of staff	Directed and Free Play
	Our crèches are run by experienced/qualified staff and the room must not be left unattended. Any member of staff that leaves the room should always inform their colleague/s. The amount of staff allocated will be, where possible, based on our existing ratios, and activities will be set up in line with the EYFS.	

* It is permissible for one staff member to supervise both areas for very limited time spans, e.g. if a child needs to be changed, be accompanied to the toilet etc.