

Vista Coop Policies and Procedures

1. Introduction

We would like to thank you for choosing Vista Coop for your childcare needs. We look forward to providing your children with a safe, warm and caring environment that will nurture them and help them grow into healthy, happy and well-adjusted children, full of wonder for the world around them. The following policies and procedures will ensure a safe, creative, stimulating and caring environment which promotes self-esteem, sound character, responsibility and respect.

Your child will be under the care of qualified and experienced childcarers who will ensure that these policies are implemented for the benefit of all children and their families.

2. Admissions

The following points are meant to guide you. Should you have any queries about anything please do not hesitate to discuss it with us.

2.1 Babies (0-12 months)

Food and Drink Policy for Babies

- Milk bottle feeds that are already made up and brought to the Centre on a daily basis, should be labelled with the child's name and date of preparation. Same goes for expressed milk. Alternatively, you can provide us with a thermos with hot water and a container with the needed milk powder.
- Special dietary requirements. We adopt a specific procedure for recording and implementing of the necessary arrangements by staff members. The documents and instructions for these are present in each room and readily available to designated carers as necessary.
- Food Preparation. Our carers are all qualified in food handling and thus are ready to prepare and heat up food and drink to the appropriate temperatures.
- Food storage and refrigeration. Our centre avails itself of appropriate storage and refrigeration of food as required.
- Our policy includes a very flexible meal times procedure that is tailor-made to meet individual child requirements. Furthermore, our carers are trained to offer assistance whilst encouraging child independence at meals.
- We ensure that sufficient supply of drinking water is available at all times. Families are asked to supply us with a separate bottle of water, apart from the milk.

- Kindly send in an adequate amount of nappies on a daily basis. Also please include a supply of whatever you normally use when changing your baby's soiled nappy (wipes, cream etc.). Alternatively you may provide a full pack of nappies and wipes to be left at the Centre, labelled with the child's name and our carers will notify you when the supply gets short.

- Kindly send in an old t-shirt (an old one of yours or of an older sibling would be ideal) or an apron to be used during messy activities like cooking and art.
- A timed schedule of feeding, sleeping and changing times for your baby will always be available for you to consult when collecting your baby. Your child will be assigned a communication book which our carers will use to note down significant events of the day such that you may have a better picture of what your baby was up to whilst in our care.
- Whilst we will be providing all bedding (sheet and blanket) required by your baby, please feel free to bring in your own should you so wish.
- Please make sure that your baby always has a spare set of clothing available. This will be kept here, we will send this back for laundering when required.
- We suggest that, if your baby uses a soother, you send a spare one of the same type s/he uses to be kept here, just in case you forget it at home.
- We emphasize that all items including comforters (in Maltese, qlejba) should be clearly labelled with your child's name.

2.2 Toddlers

(approx 13-36 months)

Food and Drink Policy for toddlers

- Milk bottle feeds that are already made up and brought to the Centre on a daily basis, should be labeled with the child's name and date of preparation. Alternatively, you can provide us with a thermos with hot water and a container with the needed milk powder. A separate bottle of water should always be brought in, apart from the milk.
- Please put labels on all bottles, lunch boxes and bags and make sure that the labels are replaced when they are washed away as names become illegible.
- Only plain birthday cakes are allowed.
- Children who come before 8:30am are welcome to bring in a yoghurt or some other breakfast food. All children sit down for a mid-morning snack at 10:30am and this should see them through till 1:00pm. Ideal foods for our 10:30am snack are sandwiches, fruit (diced or sliced), dry cereal, dried fruit, chopped vegetables, yogurt etc. Children who leave by 1:00pm should ideally have their lunchtime meal at home. Those who stay later than 1:00pm should also have a lunch which we will willingly warm, if necessary.
- Special dietary requirements. We adopt a specific procedure for recording and implementing of the necessary arrangements by staff members. The documents and instructions for these are present in each room and readily available to designated carers as necessary.
- Food Preparation. Our carers are all qualified in food handling and thus are ready to prepare and heat up food and drink to the appropriate temperatures.
- Food storage and refrigeration. Our centre avails itself of appropriate storage and refrigeration of food as required.
- Our policy includes a very flexible meal times procedure that is tailor-made to meet individual child requirements. Furthermore, our carers are trained to offer assistance whilst encouraging child independence at meals.
- We ensure that sufficient supply of drinking water is available at all times. Families are asked to supply us with a separate bottle of water.

- Kindly ensure that all footwear used by your child is comfortable and of the right size. Footwear must either be fastened with Velcro or else is of the slip-on kind. Lace-up footwear is not practical for such young children and is to be avoided.
- Kindly send in an old shirt or t-shirt (an old one of yours or of an older sibling would be ideal) or an apron to be used during messy activities like cooking and art.
- If your child is not yet toilet-trained please send an adequate amount of nappies on a daily basis. Also please include a supply of whatever you normally use when changing your child's soiled nappy (wipes, cream etc.). Alternatively you may provide a full pack of nappies and wipes to be left at the Centre, labelled with the child's name and our carers will notify you when the supply gets short.
- Please make sure that your child always has a spare set of clothing available. This will be kept here, we will send this back for laundering when required.
- We suggest that, if your baby uses a soother, you send a spare one of the same type s/he uses to be kept here, just in case you forget it at home.
- In line with our policy of outdoor play come rain or shine, you are kindly requested to bring in a pair of rubber boots and a rain jacket with hood. These may or may not be kept here and it is up to you to tell us what you wish to do.
- A child's sleeping pattern is different from one another and we observe these needs in consultation with the family. Please note that within their group, sleeping patterns may vary due to the various activities and distractions. Please note that at no time will we force a child to sleep and at no time will we stop children from sleeping or force them to stay awake.

3. Healthy Eating Policy

Please ensure that all food sent in for your child is nutritious and as fresh as possible. An excessive intake of sugar and salt is harmful. Required amounts of these are normally found naturally in the food we eat as part of a healthy, balanced diet and therefore foods high in sugar like biscuits and cookies (not to mention sweets) and snacks with excessive amounts of salt, such as crisps and similar snacks, are not welcome at our Childcare Centres. Please also refrain from sending nuts as these are the frequent causes of allergies apart from being a choking hazard in most cases. Drinks should ideally be milk or water. A fridge is available and therefore food and drink like milk and yoghurt are welcome.

4. Jewellery and toys

Your child does not need to bring jewellery, toys or expensive items to the Centre. Jewellery includes any type of ornamental items, including bracelets, necklaces and earrings (of any type). When such items are brought they attract the attention of other children which does not usually have the desired aftermath. There is also a risk that the item gets dismantled, loose, broken or lost – which thereafter might be harmful to our children. So please do not send your child with any jewellery, toys or expensive items whatsoever.

5. Transition

5.1 Home to Centre

The transition from home to the childcare centre is tailored according to the child's needs. It is recommended that families should visit the childcare centre together with the child once before the child starts attending. It is also recommended that, if possible, you start leaving your child for a short period of time and then gradually increase it to the full care you might need. Parents are also welcome to stay for some time at the centre with the child as agreed with our centre manager/room coordinator at the initial stages of settling in.

For some children (and families) this may be the first experience of childcare away from home. We understand that this may be distressing and it is normal for most families to feel apprehensive when they are to give up their precious little ones to strangers for the first time. It is also normal for children to cry and clutch at their parent/guardian as they are leaving. Children usually adjust very rapidly in the environment that we have set up in our Centre. If, in the rare occasion, the child continues to cry incessantly, we will contact the family to inform of the issue.

5.2 Centre to Kindergarten

The transition from childcare centre to Kindergarten might be overwhelming. For this reason, our carers support all children, according to their needs, in order to prepare them for school. We encourage independence, help during potty-training, and mentally prepare the children under our care for their next step in education. We are willing to meet educators from the child's prospective school in order to discuss progress of development, and also prepare a development report for the school's reference.

6. Partnership with families

Families are always welcome in our Childcare centre and we operate on an 'open door' policy. All that we offer children at our childcare centres is only meaningful in the context of a healthy relationship between families and us. We encourage open and frequent dialogue (via emails, calls and appointments) and ensure that we address concerns as quickly and effectively as possible. We appreciate that parents are entrusting us with their precious children and promise to treat them as our own. To emphasize, we believe that our childcare centre must be in partnership with families for a richer learning experience. Furthermore, from time to time, we organize activities, such as parents' days, Christmas activities and graduation ceremonies, in which parents are invited to participate.

It is helpful to us for families to give feedback on how their child is faring. This information helps us respond most effectively to the child's individual needs and also improve our service. We always respond in the strictest of confidence over any personal information given by the family or child.

All children's files and information compiled are confidential and will only be seen by us, the child's family and relevant professionals. Information about the child's day is shared daily with the child's family by verbal report and any work that the child has done is shown to the parents if it is on display. We also track the child's progress using a Learning Outcome Framework record

document, developed specifically for your child at the appropriate age. We will share this document with the family at the end of the age-phase.

We are more than happy to collaborate with other professionals such as speech therapists, CDAU assessors, amongst others, should this be required in the interest of the child.

Activity reports are prepared monthly. These include information about activities and plenty of photos. These reports are posted on our website and are password protected.

7. Safety and Security of Children

7.1 Indoors

The setting and furnishings are informal, spacious and bright. Age-appropriate sanitary facilities are available. Toilet cubicles provide the required privacy and are non-locking for safety reasons. All glass on the premises is safe for children and will not shatter on impact. We have safety covers on power sockets and gates to prevent children leaving safe areas as well as door protectors at each useable door. Outside doors are kept locked at all times.

7.2 The garden/outdoor area

Our outside area has been designed to offer diverse opportunities to the children. The outdoor area is equipped with outdoor play equipment and serves as a paddling pool area in summer.

8. Health and Safety Policy

We are required to consider the health and safety of all the children attending our Centre and therefore we must insist that parents/guardians do not bring their children when sick. If you are doubtful whether the symptoms of your child are that of requiring your child to stay at home, please phone Administration as early as possible so we can assess whether it is fine to bring your child or not.

If your child shows any sign of illness when she/he is at the Centre then you will be contacted to arrange the pick-up of your child. If you cannot leave your place of work it may be sensible to arrange a back-up plan for somebody who would be able to collect the child should this occur. If we feel your child needs urgent medical attention/treatment, we will, of course, seek this on your behalf. It is of vital importance that you keep contact telephone numbers up to date so that we can contact you. If no one can be reached the responsibility of your child's health will be assumed by the doctor.

If the child cannot attend on any particular day kindly advise us beforehand or at least, before 8:30am on that day. In case of absence of 3 days or more due to sickness kindly bring a medical certificate stating that the child is fit to attend the nursery again. In case of allergies, kindly obtain a doctor's certificate to this effect.

9. Medicinals

Although we do not generally administer any medicines, we understand that some children may suffer from chronic conditions such as asthma or allergies, which in circumstances, may necessitate the administration of medicinal treatment by our carers.

In such cases, parents must provide us with a doctor's prescription which includes dosage and instructions of how to administer. Parents must ensure that proper training is given to our staff on the proper procedures for administration of said medicines.

9.1 Immunisation

Parents are to provide us with a copy of the immunisation record of their child and must inform us when new inoculations are given. Should parents require further information, one may consult the National Immunisation Schedule as published by the authorities.

10. Behaviour management

Kids coming to our Centre should feel that they are coming to have fun and learn in a safe and secure environment free from the threat of injury or harassment of any kind. Any actions harmful to any child will be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner. Kids are expected to behave properly and to respect the persons and property around them. We believe that children must gradually assume responsibility for their own behaviour and the consequences for their actions.

10.1 Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour which:

- Is dangerous, hurtful or offensive to someone else – other children or adults;
- Is dangerous to the child himself/herself;
- Will make another child unwelcome or unacceptable to other people;
- Damages other people's property.

10.2 Positive discipline

- We endorse Positive Discipline as an effective way of setting limits for children:
- Rewarding good behaviour - rewards are constructive and encourage further effort. A kind word of praise is often sufficient reward.
- Setting realistic limits according to age and stage of development - because as children grow and develop, their understanding of the consequences of their behaviour increases and our expectations of them change.
- Setting a good example - because young children take more notice of how we behave and what we say, they also like to copy and repeat.
- Encouragement, not orders and instructions - because "Do as you're told" and "Because I said so" teaches nothing for next time. Positive discipline means explaining why.
- Being consistent - saying no and meaning no - because children need to know where they stand and it helps if they know that we mean what we say.
- Building children's self-esteem - shaming, scolding, hurting and humiliating children can lead to even worse behaviour. Attention, approval and praise can build self-esteem and a child who feels valued is more likely to behave well.
- Children are explained the rules, so that they are familiar with the guidelines. We stress two main patterns of desired behaviour - respect for other people and respect for property.

However, there will be disagreements between children. Young children especially, who are not adept at communication; have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys or bite because of their frustration not because of any desire to hurt anyone. When these situations occur the methods we use to manage unwanted behaviour are:

- Challenging it immediately
- Explaining why it is unacceptable in a way suitable to the child's level of understanding
- Distracting the child
- Offering an alternative way of doing things
- Removing the child from the situation
- Using sanctions if necessary e.g., withholding treats or removing a toy for a short period
- Showing the harm they did to the other child
- Asking child to apologise for the harm

10.3 Discipline Procedures

If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above mentioned techniques, we will request a meeting with the parents/guardians and together we will try to find a solution. You may be called to remove your child if his/her behaviour prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children. If the problem continues, sadly other arrangements by the parents for the care of the child may have to be made, for the safety and well-being of all.

Methods we do not use to manage unwanted behaviour:

- Physical punishment including slapping, smacking, shaking
- Verbal abuse/name calling
- Frightening or humiliating the child
- Withholding food or drink or sleep.

We recognize the importance of a positive, consistent approach and of giving plenty of praise and encouragement.

11. Biting policy

It is quite distressing for any parent to learn that her/his child has been hurt in any way while away from home and biting is considered as an extremely aggressive form of anti-social behaviour. All anti-social behaviour is addressed at our Centres, with special emphasis on biting incidents which are not tolerated. Our carers provide an excellent standard of supervision, however, some incidents of pinching, scratching, pushing, biting etc. do sometimes happen unfortunately. Most of the time these incidents happen extremely quickly and are usually the result of a disagreement over a favourite toy between kids. For every unlucky incident the carers will have successfully averted numerous such potential incidents.

The following is the policy we adopt for dealing with anti-social behaviour including biting.

11.1 The first instance

First of all the hurt child will be comforted. Most times a hurt child recovers extremely fast. If the child has already started talking, the carers will try to see what happened or what caused the incident so that they can then explain to the offending child the gravity of their action when they have hurt another child. After encouraging the child to apologise to the other child, the incident will be recorded in the incident book. Parents are then informed of the situation and are made to sign a declaration form as proof that they have been advised about the incident. This record will not be shown to the parents of the hurt child as this will disclose the name of the biter and goes against our policy of confidentiality and possible conflict. As a first occasion this incident can be accepted as a one-off incident and most of the time this behaviour will not be repeated.

11.2 The second time

If the child bites for a second time or even shows an intention to bite a child at the Centre, the parents will be notified straight away and will be asked to collect the child immediately thus reinforcing the principle that if a child bites she/he cannot be with the other children.

11.3 The third time

If the child bites for a third time, the parents will be asked not to bring the child for a whole week.

11.4 The next occurrence

At the next occurrence of this behaviour the parents will be asked not to bring the child any more so that no further harm will come to the other children in our care.

In such instances we are more than happy to collaborate with other professionals should this be required in the interest of the child.

12. Child protection

Our Centre follows the child protection policies and procedures as established by the National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities and each member of our staff is bound to comply with these standards. Our staff who are trained to recognize signs of suspected abuse are bound to report any suspicions to the Administration, who in turn, is obliged to report said suspicions to the appropriate authorities after the investigation is undertaken in a confidential manner. Should staff feel that Administration has not taken heed of their reports in a correct manner they are duty bound to take any suitable measure to inform the competent authority directly (Agencija Appogg Tel 2295 9000 or Freephone 179). Moreover we have strict controls on who has access to the childcare centre and whom we will allow a child to be collected by.

During nappy changing, carers are accompanied by a colleague and/or supervised by the Centre Manager. Each activity room has a nappy changing facility which is visible and not hidden behind closed doors.

13. Registration

A non-refundable registration fee is applicable to all new applications.

Applications for fee-paying children must also be accompanied by the first month's fee. Thereafter fees are payable monthly in advance, immediately upon receipt of the bill. Public Holidays are not replaceable.

14. Free childcare scheme

All our centre are approved and participate to the Free Childcare Scheme. Please refer to the terms and conditions of the Free Childcare Scheme as laid out by the Education Department.

15. Child's personal records

All childcare staff respect the confidentiality of parents and children. Only staff who work with the child will have access to the file with information about the child. When information regarding their child is shared with parents, it is done in a sensitive manner. Discussions about a child are not held in front of the child.

16. Collecting your child

16.1 Authorised persons

Details of persons authorised to collect your child are requested during registration. It is emphasized that such persons must be in possession of their ID card when collecting children. Under no circumstance will children be handed over to anyone who is not listed in the registration form and without an ID card. When in doubt we will call the parents who will be asked to verify any change in norm.

We are sure you will appreciate that these systems are in place for the safety of your child and we therefore kindly ask for your full cooperation in this matter. Although our staff will get used to you as time goes by, there may be circumstances when a different carer who might be new to you is here when you collect your child. This may happen if we have a reliever such as in case of sickness of our regular staff.

16.2 Uncollected child

Obviously things can happen at the last minute which can cause delays; whenever possible please contact us to let us know when you expect to arrive. If your child is not collected at the agreed time, we will of course continue to care for your child, however late fees may be applied.

17. Our human resources

Background checks and screening as required by law are done on all staff members for the safety of our kids. Moreover staff are monitored and surveilled for increase of safety. All staff are trained and qualified. Students are supervised constantly and not left alone with children.

17.1 Staff recruitment

Vista Coop is an Equal Opportunity employer and always endeavors to find the best staff for the job of a childcarer. Vista Coop does not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of gender, race, colour, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, parental status, religious or political beliefs. All employment policies, procedures and practices are developed and monitored with the equal opportunity concept in mind.

17.2 Staff development

On-going training is given to our staff as staff development and keeping staff up-to-date. Training will cover personal characteristics, motivation process, expertise and motivation level. Training involves reviewing the role of the childcarers while identifying and discussing any difficulties or obstacles encountered by the childcarers. During training we plan for the future, agree specific objectives to achieve those plans, and plan the topics to be covered with the children in the following weeks through brainstorming sessions.

17.3 Staff supervision

Staff are constantly monitored and surveilled for the safety and protection of the children.

17.4 Staff Record Keeping

Vista Coop keeps the necessary staff details including contract of employment, appointed position and an established salary structure. All documents pertaining to individual staff members, their qualifications, time and attendance are kept by the organisation in strict confidence.

18. Whistle blowing

Vista Coop gives utmost importance to the issue of safeguarding our children from any kind of abuse in our Centres. All reports by whistle-blowers are treated confidentially to the greatest extent possible. Any staff member who notices any form of abuse taking place, the staff member has the rightful duty to report such instances of any inappropriate behaviour to Child Safety Services on 2598 3440 or 2598 3473-9. Reports may be forwarded to the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) and to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) on 2598 2311 or 2598 2505.

19. Complaints about the service

We intend to provide the highest quality of care and education for your child. Any parent/guardian who feels uncomfortable about any aspect of the childcare centre should talk these anxieties over with the Administration of the Centre. We believe any complaint can be made constructively and resolved at a very early stage. Issues underlying the complaint are identified, investigated and discussed, and eventually, action will be taken as required by the situation. The person making the complaint will be informed of what can or cannot be done. One can also forward their comments and issues to the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) and to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) on 2598 2311 or 2598 2505.

20. Data protection

Vista Coop realizes the importance of ensuring that personal information held is treated confidentially and is committed to ensuring that all personal information is only collected, disclosed, used and stored in accordance and conform with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other supplementary laws and regulations. Your and your child's privacy is critically important to us. At Vista Coop we have a few fundamental principles: a) We don't ask you for personal information unless we truly need it; b) We don't share your personal information with anyone except to comply with the law, develop our services, or protect our or your child's rights and/or their safety; and c) we don't store personal information on our servers unless required for the on-going operation of one of our services. If you have questions about deleting or correcting your or your kid's personal data please contact us.

Use and disclosure of personal information: Any personal information that we collect will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which it has been provided to us. Personal information may need to be disclosed to external service providers in order for those service providers to fulfil their service obligations to the organisation. Where personal information is disclosed to an external party, Vista Coop will take steps to ensure that the external party treats such information confidentially and in accordance with the GDPR.

Email communications: If you have listed your email address in the application form, you may receive email communications from us, and we may use your contact details to perform our services.

Accessing and correcting personal Information: You may request us to provide you with access to personal information we hold about you. If any personal information we hold about you is not accurate, complete or up to date, please let us know and in most cases, we will use all reasonable efforts to update the information.

Personal information security: Vista Coop is committed to keeping secure the data you provide to us and we will take all reasonable precautions to protect your personally identifiable information from loss, misuse or alteration. From time to time it may be necessary for us to revise our privacy policy. We reserve the right to change our privacy policy at any time. We will notify you of this by sending you an email.

21. Equal opportunities policy

Vista Coop is committed to promoting equal opportunities throughout the operations and activities at our Childcare Centres, which include promotional material, employment of our staff, their training, as well as the planning and implementation of all educational activities and care to the children entrusted in our care. When considering applicants for employment at our Centres the criteria for employment will be the ability to fulfil the work role effectively within practical placements. All our clients who include children, their families, as well as our staff and trainees, are respected as individuals and will not experience any disadvantages or receive less favourable treatment than others because of gender, family responsibilities, age, colour, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, nationality, beliefs, religion or class.

22. Notes

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, some policies and procedures have been amended in order to reflect the guidelines for child care centres issued on the 25 June 2020 by the Ministry for Health. A copy of these guidelines may be found on https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidelines-for-Child-Care-Centres_25Jun20.pdf

- Your child's communication book will be kept at the Centre, however it will be available for you to check when picking up your child. You may also photograph the daily page for reference.
- Clean bedding should be provided from home and will be returned daily.

- Spare clothes are not kept at the Centre, however we suggest that you keep a set in your child's bag daily.
- Although we are aware that settling in might be distressing for some children, parents are not allowed to stay at the Centre with their child. All parents have to drop-off their child in front of our main door.
- Activities for parents (such as parents' day, Christmas activity, graduation ceremony) cannot be organized.

23. Appendices

- A. Admission Form.
- B. Consent Form for outing without parents.
- C. Consent Form for outing with parents.
- D. Complaint Form.
- E. Injury Report Template.
- F. Fees Structure.

September 2020

Vista Coop

228 Triq Misrah il-Barrieri, Sta. Venera SVR 1759

Tel: 2144 5758

Email: info@vista.coop

www.vista.coop