

## **Manual of Policies and Procedures**

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 childcare educators who will ensure that these policies are implemented for the benefit of all children and their families.

### **1. The Philosophy of the Centre**

Vista Coop is committed to provide professional, positive and nurturing experiences for all children in a safe and secure setting. We encourage learning and sensory-motor development according to the child's individual needs through interaction with others and the environment. Thus, this proposal demonstrates Vista Coop's capability to meet the project objectives.

Towards this, our guiding principle is of 'care':

- care for ourselves,
- care for others and
- care for the environment

We value and celebrate the diversity that our colleagues, families and children bring to our centres and we strive to foster a strong sense of community by creating a respectful and caring environment.

We treat all colleagues and children with equal concern and respect. This is the basis of our creed in the provision of early years education and childcare services.

#### **1.1 Our Aim**

The programme of activities that Vista Coop currently provides is based on the emerging curriculum. The programme aims at nurturing and enriching the development of children of all abilities through appropriate early learning experiences owned by the same children. This is achieved also in collaboration with parents and the community. The activities (that are a result of observing the children) seek to ensure achievement for all children and provide a sound holistic foundation for their social, cognitive and emotional development.

Vista Coop provides an age-appropriate programme of activities that:

- Offers a professional, positive and nurturing experience for all children in a safe and secure setting, within an already existing location within the community
- Ensures the best health and safety standards
- Encourages learning outcomes and sensory-motor development through play
- Are an outcome of the emerging curriculum according to the individual needs of the child
- Guides children's behaviour in positive ways - especially through relationships with self, others and the environment
- Encourages the involvement of parents as partners in the development of their children
- Makes use of resources and equipment to accommodate the needs of children including those with a disability
- Provides an enriching experience for all those who work within our settings

## **1.2 Programme of Activities**

The approach that Vista Coop has adopted to Early Years Education and Childcare has been inspired by that of the ‘Reggio Emilia’. This world-famous model is decades old and has developed over the years by the very people who experience it, the educators, children and parents of Reggio Emilia in Italy. It is an approach that sees the child as an individual with its own individual development that can be unleashed only by understanding the process and presenting contexts in front of the child by means of the ‘100 languages’ in which the child already communicates with and thus aiding it to develop holistically and towards its full potential.

Vista Coop truly believes that to achieve its objectives, the main stakeholders are to be identified and brought central to the proposed activities as follows:

## **1.3 Our Children**

Children are central to this philosophy and are, from birth, considered as competent, resourceful, curious, imaginative and inventive with an innate desire to interact and communicate with others. Children grow and learn through interaction and relationships with others including, parents, staff and peers, in a friendly and welcoming learning environment.

Vista Coop values and respects the different racial origins, religions, cultures and languages reflecting Maltese society so that each child is valued as an individual and does not discriminate against children on the grounds of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, class and family status.

Vista Coop provides equal chances for each child to learn and develop to their full potential, taking into account the age and stage of development of each child, their ability, gender, ethnicity, and language.

Vista Coop gives all children access to a range of books, toys, and educational material, which provide positive images and examples of the diversity of life reflecting today’s society.

Vista Coop is committed to help children feel good about themselves and others, through the value of diversity which makes each and every child a unique individual.

## **1.4 Our Childcare Educators – A Valuable Human Resource**

The role of the educator is that of a learner alongside the children. The educator is also a researcher, a resource and a guide in the children’s journey of discovery. Within this role the educator listens carefully, observes and documents the individual child’s and group’s work and growth whilst provoking and stimulating thinking. Childcare educators also reflect upon their own teaching and learning such that they engage in a process of continuously building up on previous experience. This allows them to stimulate the children to take the experience further.

Vista Coop considers its human resources to be of critical significance in its endeavours to provide high quality childcare services. For this reason, employees of Vista Coop enjoy conditions which go beyond those stipulated by the Standards.

Administratively, background checks are routinely carried out on staff for the safety of the kids. All members of staff are qualified to the industry standards and beyond. Each member is monitored and supervised to ensure that standards are maintained at all times.

Furthermore, Vista Coop gives the opportunity to students of childcare and other social disciplines from various local institutions to undergo a work placement experience for a number of hours. We also offer work placement experience to foreign students and professionals. Furthermore, students attending secondary schools who might be interested in following the childcare profession are also invited to undergo a job-shadowing experience.

## 1.5 Our Client Families

Families are always welcome in our centres 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 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 centres must be in partnership with families for a richer learning experience. Furthermore, from time to time, we organize activities in which parents are invited to participate, including a bi-annual Parents’ Day.

## 1.6 The Environment

The ‘Reggio Emilia’ approach refers to the environment as the ‘third teacher’. A great deal of attention is given to the look and feel of the places utilized by the children. Educators organise environments and spaces that are rich in possibilities and provocations and that invite the children to explore and solve problems, often in small groups and using age-appropriate materials and tools. Apart from specific age-related areas, common areas are available in the centre for all children. These spaces also allow children of different age-groups to come together.

## 2. The Centre’s Approach to Care, Learning and Play

All centres operated by Vista Coop are geared towards the holistic development of our children in a fun environment. Using the concept of emerging curriculum, we aim to achieve high quality learning outcomes.

### 2.1 Equipment

The following equipment can be found in each of our childcare centres:

#### *Pretend Play:*

- Dolls (including multi-ethnic)
- Dressing-up clothes and accessories
- Shatterproof mirrors
- Children’s kitchen
- Animals (farmyard, wild, ocean, zoo)
- Puppets
- Dinosaurs

#### *Domestic Play:*

- Utensil/cutlery sets
- Dinner sets
- Mini cooking sets
- Let’s pretend groceries
- Toy cleaning equipment for children

#### *Sand and Water:*

- Sand/water trays and accessories (boats, measuring jugs, funnels, sand moulds, scoops, buckets, sieves etc)
- Play sand

#### *Construction:*

- Nesting and sorting toys
- Building bricks
- Wooden cubes
- Soft blocks
- Jigsaw bricks

#### *Arts and Crafts:*

- Wax crayons/pastels
- Colouring pencils
- Markers
- Sponges/brushes
- White and coloured paper
- Safety scissors
- Clay
- Play dough
- Modelling materials and tools
- Selection of fabrics, threads, felt
- Palette knives
- Recycled materials

*Musical Instruments:*

- Percussion (triangles, cymbals, tambourines, maracas, drums)
- Sensory bottles
- Music player
- Selection of instrumental music

*Physical Activities:*

- Push and pull toys
- Hoops
- Climbing frames
- Adventure gym system
- Mats
- Play slide
- Tunnel systems
- Tricycles
- Different sized balls

*Numeracy:*

- Items for sorting and counting activities
- Measuring scoops
- Funnels
- Rulers
- Shapes
- Balances
- Flashcards

*Listening, Reading and Communication:*

- Age-appropriate books
- Plastic books/Cloth books/Picture books/Board books
- Big books
- Nursery rhyme and music books
- Board games

## **2.2 Content Based on the Learning Outcomes**

Our qualified educators interact with the children through the range of activities designed to cater for their physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs. The approach chosen for our childcare provision is in line with the Reggio Emilia experience. Thus, there is no timetable of activities which is fixed in stone, but these activities are more or less designed according to the needs of the child/ren together with the events that may have been happening in the centre, according to the season or the weather, for example. Importance is given to the actual twinning of these activities to the range of learning outcomes as set in an age-appropriate manner.

## **2.3 Timetable**

The following is a basic schedule according to age group.

*Babies: 0-18 months*

With this age group, the educator interacts with the young child according to her/his needs and provides a lot of stimuli through multi-sensory activities and by providing a lot of space. At such a tender age, more time will be taken to see to the immediate needs of the child like feeding, changing nappies and sleeping than the older age group. However, a typical plan of activities would be:

- 15 mins: singing nursery rhymes combined with finger play
- 30 mins: providing a number of multi-sensory toys with different textures and sounds to observe, touch and choose for play
- 30 mins: carrying out a main daily activity
- 30-45 mins: outdoor play
- 15 mins: simple story-telling

As mentioned above, the rest of the time will be taken up by immediate needs, namely sleeping, feeding, nappy changing etc.

### *Toddlers: 19-36 months*

An example of a daily routine for this age group, which consists of Over 1, Toddlers 1 and Toddlers 2 is as follows:

- 06:00 – 08:30 Settling in, free play and breakfast
- 08:30 – 09:00 Circle time
- 09:00 – 11:30 Activities in small groups and outdoor play
- 11:30 – 12:30 Lunch
- 12:30 – 14:00 Nap
- 14:00 onwards Snacks, activities in small groups, and outdoor play

Activities in small groups vary depending on the educator's timetable, and this will be communicated to you every time your child joins a different age group.

Preferably, toddlers consume breakfast, lunch, and snacks within the dedicated timeframes. No eating is allowed whilst running around.

Nappy-changing and nap times vary according to each child's needs.

Play activities include:

- Threading
- Books
- Story telling
- Puzzles
- Painting and colouring
- Playdough
- Matching games
- Dressing up
- Collages
- Sand and water play
- Cooking
- Playing musical instruments done with recycled materials
- Cutting with scissors
- Dancing

### **3. Internal Review Process**

Vista Coop evaluates its provision of childcare services vis-à-vis the National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years) (2021). We strive to collect feedback from the different stakeholders within our centre, focusing on the families, the employees and other national players in the sector. This information is internally reviewed so as excellence in service provision is achieved.

### **4. Assessment Practices**

#### **4.1 Documenting the Activities**

Children's work is documented and displayed. Children's artwork, models, and collections that children have made, are displayed at both adults' and children's eye-levels and eventually inserted in each individual's portfolio. We also take notes on observations, photos of activities that children engage in, and communicate with parents through an educational app on a daily basis.

Documentation is necessary for children to revisit, build-upon and reconstruct feelings, ideas and understandings. This helps the children trace their words and actions – making a path of their learning process. Concepts and hypotheses are presented in multiple forms; and media such as print, art, models, drama, music, puppetry and shadow play – all help towards this. These multiple experiences are considered essential to a child's understanding.

Documentation also helps us evaluate, on an individual level, the progress of a child and plan ahead the different 'contexts' that are needed towards the next steps of learning. All this information helps us respond most effectively to the child's individual needs.

Documentation also informs parents of their child's activities and development, since it provides a tangible proof of the happenings within the childcare centre environment. This also stimulates discussion between the parents and carers – a necessary tool for all parties to learn from.

#### **4.2 Information Technology**

Vista Coop has a custom-made, secure internet-based portal, that serves as a time and attendance system service for all its centres. The system includes data management for both children and employees. It also has functionality to generate automatic billing and invoicing. The logging mechanism is by barcode scanner.

Each centre is equipped with a stand-alone computer, internet router and printer. Communication between centres is efficiently done through a mail server (Microsoft-platform) and inter-coop telephone system. These facilities help immensely in the management of each centre and enhance inter-centre cooperation and information exchange.

### **5. Admission to the Centre**

Before admission, the family will be given a tour of the centre and the policies and procedures are explained. During this first meeting, all issues related to childcare will be discussed and a tailor-made programme of attendance will be modelled for that particular family. The childcare centre application form needs to be filled-in together with presentation of a birth certificate and immunization records of the child.

#### **5.1 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.

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

#### **5.2 Babies (0-12 months)**

- Food and drink: 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 educators as necessary.
- Food Preparation: Our educators 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 flexible meal times procedure that is tailor-made to meet individual child requirements. Furthermore, our educators 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 large bottle of water.

- Kindly send in an adequate number 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 a t-shirt 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 an account on our app which our educators 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.
- Please provide the necessary flat bed sheets (120x60cms) and a blanket required by your baby. These will be given back to you every Friday to be replaced with clean ones on Monday.
- Please make sure that your baby always has a spare set of clothing available. This will be kept at the centre. We will send this back for laundering or for replacing 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.

### **5.3 Toddlers (approximately 13-36 months)**

- Food and drink: 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. Alternatively, you can provide us with a thermos with hot water and a container with the needed milk powder.
- 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 or cupcakes are allowed.
- Children who come before 8:30am are welcome to bring in breakfast food. Please make sure that your child has enough food to last throughout the day. All children sit down for meal times. Ideal foods as snacks are sandwiches, fruit (diced or sliced), dry cereal, dried fruit, chopped vegetables, yoghurt etc. Lunch is willingly warmed 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 educators as necessary.
- Food Preparation: Our educators 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 flexible meal times procedure that is tailor-made to meet individual child requirements. Furthermore, our educators 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 large bottle of water.

## **5.4 Jewellery and Toys**

Your child does not need to bring jewellery, toys or expensive items to the centre. Jewellery, including bracelets, necklaces, studs and earrings (of any type) cannot enter our centre. There is 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.

## **6. Equitable Opportunities**

Vista Coop, certified with the equality mark, is committed to promote gender equality and equal opportunities throughout the operations including:

- in all educational activities and care of children entrusted in our care
- in admitting and accepting as clients all families
- in designing promotional material
- in employment, deployment and training of staff

Furthermore, Vista Coop seeks to employ persons with disability who are deployed according to their potential both in childcare services operations and at office support levels.

We are an equal opportunities employer and when considering applicants for employment, our criteria for employment is the ability to fulfil the work role effectively irrespective of their ability, gender and/or family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, age, religion/belief, and race/ethnic origin.

### **6.1 Culture and Diversity**

Vista Coop emphasizes the role of culture in our daily lives. We celebrate diversity as an opportunity for self-understanding and enrichment. Children learn to appreciate their own cultural heritage as well as that of others. This gives them the opportunity to build their self-identity in the context of their national identity and as citizens of the world.

## **7. Transition**

### **7.1 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.

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 you.

### **7.2 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.

## **8. Healthy Eating**

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.

## **9. Positive Behaviour Management**

Children 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. Children 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.

### **9.1 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.

### **9.2 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 those 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, for example, 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

### **9.3 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, drink or sleep

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

### **9.4 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 educators 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. For every unlucky incident the educators will have successfully averted numerous such potential incidents.

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

#### *a) 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.

*b) 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.

*c) 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.

*d) 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.

## **10. Working in 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, the app, 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 on our app and by verbal report. We also track the child's progress using a Learning Outcome Framework record document, developed specifically for your child at the appropriate age. We share this document with the family at every parents' day.

The app is updated daily. This includes information about activities, observations, basic care, and plenty of photos. These are posted on the app to which families are given access in a password protected environment.

## **11. Working in Partnership with Early Years Professionals**

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

## **12. Sick Children**

Vista Coop's aim is to protect all children and staff from serious infection while ensuring the children are cared for and treated equally. This policy is designed to ensure your child is kept healthy and safe while in our care. To achieve this, we implement clear protocols to minimise the spread of infectious illness and take appropriate action if or when a child becomes unwell.

### **12.1 Guidelines**

We insist that parents/guardians do not bring their children when sick. If a child exhibits any of the following, they should stay at home and seek guidance of a medical professional:

- Cold/fever
- Mumps
- Hand, Foot and Mouth
- Unexplained rash
- Measles
- Conjunctivitis
- Impetigo
- Head lice
- Chicken Pox
- Threadworms
- Scabies
- Cold sores
- Hepatitis A
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Meningococcal Meningitis Septicaemia

### **12.2 Procedures**

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. During this time, we will move the child to a separate room and provide immediate care until their parent/guardian arrives.

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. If no one can be reached the responsibility of your child's health will be assumed by the doctor.

In case of absence due to sickness of three days or more, kindly bring a medical note stating that the child is fit to attend childcare again. If the child shows concerning signs of contagious diseases, parents will be asked to provide a medical certificate the day after. If the child is still sick when s/he is back, the centre reserves the right to call the parents to collect the child and update the sickness certificate. In case of allergies, kindly obtain a doctor's certificate to this effect. Children must be completely symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to the centre. Children might not be admitted without a medical certificate.

### **12.3 Medicinals**

The centre's staff do not administer medicine. We ask parents/guardians to keep children at home if they have been prescribed treatment for an infectious disease, until they receive medical clearance.

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 educators. 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.

### **12.4 Summary**

Your child's health and safety remain your primary responsibility: while we strive to provide the best environment for your children, we are unable to offer long-term care for sick children.

### **13. Sanitary Measures**

Vista Coop takes sanitary measures very seriously. A cleaning regime exists on a daily, weekly and monthly basis – depending on the requirements of the furnishings and usage of the resources by educators and children.

Our educators take all the necessary personal sanitary precautions and follow strict procedures when it comes to toilet training, handling children's nappies, as well as when encouraging children to wash their hands.

### **14. 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.

It is highly recommended that all children making use of the centre are in line with the National Immunisation Schedule.

### **15. Accident Management**

Vista Coop has a specific policy in place for accident management. Whilst we try to keep all areas within our centre as safe and child-proof as possible, we understand that accidents do happen and, by experience, we have built a procedure that reflects the care and quality of service that we offer to our children. All our educators are qualified first-aiders (with a special certificate in paediatric first aid) and in case of emergency or accident to a child or a group of children, we are trained to respond to the emergency according to its gravity which may include calling the emergency services as well as the family of the child.

Accident management also involves reporting internally and documenting the accident as well as informing the family of what happened and a discussion thereafter of how such incidents can be prevented. Accident reports are chronologically filed, signed by both childcare educator in charge and parent, and kept at the centre.

#### **15.1 Safety and Security**

The centre 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.

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.

### **16. Emergency Preparedness Plan (Fire Safety and Evacuation)**

Vista Coop carries out an assessment by a qualified Health and Safety engineer, who reviews all equipment and resources on an annual basis. The engineer is also consulted in relevant fields to ensure such safety. A fire evacuation plan is in place in all our centres. Fire drills are carried out every 6 months to ensure preparedness and confidence by both educators and children present.

### **17. Collecting your Child**

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 educator 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.

### **17.1 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 a child remains uncollected and we are unable to reach either parent, we will contact local authorities to help locate you. Rest assured, your child will be safely cared for in the meantime; however, please note that late pick-up fees will apply.

### **18. Child Protection**

Our Centre follows the child protection policies and procedures as established by the National Policy regarding Child Protection 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 (Agenzija Appogg on 2295 9000, or Freephone 179 or [dcps.fsws@gov.mt](mailto:dcps.fsws@gov.mt) and/or the Ministry of Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) on 2598 1305 or [whistleblower.meyr@gov.mt](mailto:whistleblower.meyr@gov.mt)). 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, educators 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.

### **19. 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 do not ask you for personal information unless we truly need it; b) We do not 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 do not 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 child'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.

## **20. 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.

Parents may also file a complaint to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) through the following channels:

Email: [customercare.dqse@gov.mt](mailto:customercare.dqse@gov.mt)

Telephone number: 2598 1424.

Filling in a Contact Form: <https://dqse.gov.mt/en/contact/>

## **21. 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 Child Protection Service (APPOGG), the Ministry of Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) on 2598 1305 or [whistleblower.meyr@gov.mt](mailto:whistleblower.meyr@gov.mt), and to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) on 2598 2311 or 2598 2505.

## **22. Staff Recruitment**

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

Vista Coop is an Equal Opportunity employer committed to recruiting the best candidates for the role of childcare educators. All employment policies, procedures, and practices are guided by the principle of fairness and non-discrimination.

Selection decisions are based solely on an individual's ability to perform the job effectively. We do not discriminate on the basis of ability, gender, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, age, religion or belief, race, nationality, marital status, parental status, or political beliefs.

### **23. Staff Development**

On-going training is given to our staff as staff development and keeping staff up-to-date. Training covers personal characteristics, motivation process, expertise and motivation level. Training also involves reviewing the role of an early childhood educator while identifying and discussing any difficulties or obstacles encountered by our staff. 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.

### **24. Staff Supervision**

Staff are constantly monitored and surveilled for the safety and protection of the children. The Centre Manager, Quality Manager and Legally Responsible Person (LRP) are directly responsible.

### **25. Appendices**

- Vista Coop application form
- Free Childcare Scheme application form
- Free Childcare Scheme terms and conditions
- Fees Structure
- Parental consent form for outings
- Incident report
- Complaint form
- Cleaning regimes

May 2026

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