



HANDBOOK

December 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Pencaitland Playgroup. Since 1968 Pencaitland Playgroup has a long tradition of working with the children of Pencaitland and surrounding areas. The Playgroup is a registered charity and therefore is financially reliant on fundraising, fees and a small grant from East Lothian Council.

We are members of Early Years Scotland (EYS) and our insurance is arranged through them.

The committee is made up of parents and carers who are interested in seeing the successful running of our Playgroup, who plan and organise fundraising events throughout the year. It's hard work but also a lot of fun for all concerned but most importantly, ensures the smooth running of our Playgroup. Parents can help us fundraise straightaway by registering with www.easyfundraising.org.uk Every time you shop online with selected retailers, a donation is made to Playgroup with no additional cost to the purchaser. Please encourage friends and family to register too!

Each session runs with a Play Leader and a Play Assistant, we currently employ a Play Leader and 2 Play Assistants. Parents also provide additional support through assisting with rota duty. This not only provides an extra pair of hands but also promotes involvement in the day to day running of Playgroup and a greater understanding of how we assist the children's progress.

Aims

- To provide a safe and secure environment for children to work and play in.
- To provide all parents and children with appropriate support to promote confidence, self-esteem and independence.
- To help children develop their social, creative, physical, cognitive, emotional and communication skills.
- To promote best practices according to the curriculum framework through planning, assessment and staff development.

DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING

Where and When

Pencaitland Playgroup is located in the Sports Pavilion in the public park beside the Bowling Green. We operate on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning. Children can be dropped off between 9.10-9.20am and collected between 11.00-11.10am. Playgroup closes on school holidays and in-service days.

Toilet Training

Children do not have to be toilet trained. Parents should supply spare nappies or pull ups (whichever you prefer your child to wear), nappy bags and wipes.

Settling In

The key to a smooth settling in is effective communication between the child, parents and staff, and

the creation of a positive and supportive environment. Communication must not only be two-way with staff keeping parents informed but also listening carefully to parents' concerns and hopes for their child. With this in mind, children are invited to attend Playgroup for a shortened session on their first day accompanied by a parent. This session will start at 9.30am and finish at 10.50am. Please see our first day checklist on page 12.

Your child's coat/jacket should be hung up on their peg at Playgroup as we do sometimes go outside.

Fees

As stated before, we are a charitable organisation, which relies heavily on fundraising events.

The fee is, at present, **£12.50 per session**, which is very reasonable compared to other groups or nursery provision. We feel that parents get very good value for money for the service we provide. To help us to survive, parents are asked to pay the full fee if the child is not in attendance through sickness or holiday, as the place is reserved for that child.

Payment is not required on

- In service days
- School Holidays

Parents are asked to contact the Play Leader at playleader@pencaitlandplaygroup.co.uk or calling via playgroup on 01875 341356 if their child will not be attending on a particular day.

If we have no contact for a month the committee will write to the parents to see whether they wish to retain a place for their child.

Illness

Please do not bring your child to Playgroup if they are suffering from an infection that can be passed to other children or staff. The same precaution applies if children have been unwell during the night. Tummy bugs and heavy colds/coughs are highly infectious and we therefore request your cooperation in minimising transmission to others.

If your child tests positive for Covid-19 or has respiratory symptoms, they should stay at home. When they no longer have a fever (if they had one), and don't need medicine to control the fever, they can return to normal activities.

If your child contracts Measles, German Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox or Whooping Cough, please inform the Playgroup. Also, please do not send the child back to Playgroup until your Doctor has advised you that there is no longer danger of infection to others.

Head lice can also be a problem in groups of small children. Please check your child's head on a weekly basis – we can advise on how to do this and provide information leaflets. Should head lice be found, please inform Playgroup in order that other parents may take necessary precautions and do not send the child back to Playgroup until the outbreak is completely clear, both of head lice and of eggs.

Safety

Safety is our main priority when working with children. To make sure that we meet all safety regulations, both the social work department and the local fire officer check our premises. We have a health and safety policy that is displayed in a folder in the entry hall.

If on any occasion you wish your child to be collected by someone other than yourself, it is essential that you inform the staff at Playgroup in advance. We will not allow your child to leave Playgroup until we have your permission, and a signing-out policy is in place.

Confidentiality

All records pertaining to the children are retained securely. Only the Playgroup Leader and the Assistant Leader have access.

Discipline

All children need boundaries and in Playgroup we have a few rules to ensure a smooth running operation, e.g. no running around the room, no throwing of toys etc. If a child should, for whatever reason, display anti-social behaviour a member of staff will try to diffuse the situation with the child or children concerned.

Children are encouraged to apologise to and to make friends with one another. The children are taught to treat each other with respect and consideration. If a child continues to have behavioural problems, parents will be contacted to discuss the matter with staff.

What we do at Playgroup

Playgroup provides opportunities for children to learn through play. Just as an appropriate diet is essential for physical growth and development, children need a safe and secure environment to explore and learn about themselves and others through the medium of play.

Play

The functions of play to assist the five aspects of child development are:

Communication and language – opportunities are provided to enhance language skills through talking and listening situations, e.g. role-play.

Physical development and movement - growth and change in the body as the child progresses; self expression through movement; awareness of the good in exercise and healthy diet. *Emotional, social and personal development* - learning to express a variety of feelings, developing independence, confidence and self-esteem; learning to relate to their peers, sharing and cooperating with other children and adults.

Knowledge and understanding of the world - developing powers of observation using the senses; awareness of the world around, technology, time, measurements, routines; ability to think, question, reason and develop their imagination.

Expressive and aesthetic development - learning to express and create ideas, feelings and imagination through a variety of media.

Activities

At Playgroup, activities are planned to enhance children's progress in key aspects of development. Effective planning establishes clear goals for learning through play that are designed to match the needs and achievements of each child.

We provide a variety of activities that we change regularly. These include:

1. Tabletop activities, e.g. jigsaws, play-dough, threading-beads, pegs and boards, changed weekly.
2. Sand and water play.
3. Construction toys, such as Duplo and Brio.
4. Role-play, dressing up and play kitchen.
5. Art and craft activities - a range of media including painting, drawing, clay, collage, cutting etc.
6. Baking.
7. Music and movement – we have a wide range of musical instruments to play with, children are encouraged to share and learn nursery rhymes, musical tapes and CDs for moving to or to dramatise a situation, etc.
8. Outdoor play.
9. Books – we have a book corner available for the children's use, containing a wide range of literature by well-known authors. Children may use the books for quiet reading or to share a book with friends. The children are read to at least once during the daily session.

ALL WORK ACHIEVED BY THE CHILDREN IS PRAISED HIGHLY BY THE STAFF.

Parent Rota

Legally we have to maintain a ratio of adults to children. At present this is 5 children to 1 adult. If Playgroup is full on any given day we rely on the parent helper to achieve this ratio. Otherwise Playgroup will close that day.

If you are unable to do your duty session, please let the committee know ASAP and a swap to another date can be facilitated.

The Playgroup leader follows a weekly plan and activities are set out before the children arrive. Join in with the children. Sit down and talk to them. Children are always keen to tell you about what they are doing. Please do not stand around chatting as this diverts your attention from the children and may cause more inhibited children to shy away from asking for help. The children are encouraged to tidy up after play. They know and understand that story time and snack times are quiet times. We would ask you to respect this also.

Your main duties will be written on the whiteboard at playgroup by the Play Leader.

Be prepared to help the children with personal hygiene e.g. washing hands.

Make yourself aware of the fire drill procedures.

If an accident occurs, make the Playgroup leader aware of it immediately. If a child upsets another child or refuses to cooperate with you, please inform the Playgroup leader/assistant as they know the children better than any of us.

We contact parents and carers by whatsapp and email with details of the parent rota. An electronic version is available via a link on GoogleSheets and a paper copy will also be displayed on the Playgroup Noticeboard.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

E-mail

You can contact us by email info@pencaitlandplaygroup.co.uk

Internet

Playgroup also has a website www.pencaitlandplaygroup.co.uk which has information on term dates and our latest fundraising events. You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pencaitlandplaygroup1>. We also have a Parent&Carer Facebook group that you can request to join once your child starts (please ensure that you answer the security questions, failure to do so will result in access denied)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2190199484536169/>

POLICIES

Complaints Procedure

If parents have any queries or problems they are worried about, they are encouraged to discuss them at the earliest opportunity with the staff. If appropriate they should arrange a time with the Playgroup Leader to discuss any issues they wish to raise. The committee's Chairperson is also happy to assist.

We must stress the importance of concerns being raised with us directly in order that they may be addressed with all speed in the interests of the child. These matters will be treated with confidentiality.

There is a complaints procedure detailed in a folder in the entry hall.

Additional Needs

Playgroup welcomes all children with additional support needs. Our policy is displayed in a folder in the entry hall, and any applicable children will be supported according to this policy.

Equal Opportunities

Playgroup supports equal opportunities and our policy is displayed in a folder in the entry hall.

Child Protection

Child Protection Awareness

All Playgroup staff are trained in child protection procedures. Guidance notes for all parents, mindful of rota duty are detailed below.

A Summary of Good Practice for Paid and Voluntary Workers

YOU MUST:

- Treat all children with respect.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with young children, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Encourage children and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour you do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Be aware that even caring physical contact may be misinterpreted.
- Recognise that caution is required in moments where you are discussing sensitive issues with children.

- Operate within Playgroup procedures.

YOU MUST NOT

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate or attention-seeking behaviour.
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of young children.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on your good name or that of Playgroup to protect you.
- Believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Take a chance when common sense, policy and practice suggest another more prudent approach.
- Ignore the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures operating within Playgroup.

WHAT TO DO

If a child discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- Allow him or her to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but **do not** investigate.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, whilst passing no judgement.
- Let them know you are glad they have shared this information with you.
- Advise the child that you **must** pass on the information.

If you suspect a child is being abused, emotionally, physically or sexually:

- Report the matter to the Playgroup leader or Chairperson.

If you receive an allegation about any adult or about yourself:

- Immediately tell the Playgroup leader or chairperson.

Try to ensure that no one is placed in a position that would cause further compromise.

IN ALL CASES:

Record the facts and report these to the Playgroup Leader or chairperson who will liaise with the local EYS representative, social work department or direct with EYS HQ in Glasgow.

You must refer; you **must not** investigate.

Data Protection Policy

How we use your information: Pencaitland Playgroup is a non for profit organisation and we will only

use your personal information to communicate aspects of playgroup services to you. The information we hold will not be shared with any 3rd party organisations.

A full version of our Data Protection Policy is available within the Playgroup.

Admissions Policy

Playgroup is registered to take children up to the age of three years. Children may attend Playgroup from the date of their second birthday onwards, provided there is a space available. Children can join the Playgroup's waiting list from 18 months of age onwards.

If Playgroup is full, or the days available are not suitable, then the child will remain on the waiting list, until a place becomes available.

Number of sessions on offer

- Children will initially be offered between one and four sessions per week, depending on availability and parental choice.
- If our waiting list is full, we will offer one session to more children rather than two or three sessions to fewer children.
- If extra sessions become available, priority will be given to children already attending Playgroup.
- If extra sessions are still available and there is no one on the waiting list (or those on the list do not require the specific sessions on offer), then children may be offered up to four sessions in total per week. This will be on the understanding that they may be asked to drop back down to two/three days, if and when new children wish to join Playgroup.
 - If the above situation arises, the children in question will be able to attend any sessions that have already been invoiced and paid for, before the change will be implemented.

Children on the waiting list will be awarded places based on the following

- Places will be awarded in the order that they have joined the waiting list. •

Leaving Playgroup

It is expected that children will leave the Playgroup when they begin pre-school nursery. This is usually from the term after their third birthday. Children from age 3 onwards:

- As soon as a child has been offered a Nursery place, the parents must inform Playgroup of the date that their child will be leaving.
- If a child is three AND has a place at Nursery AND is blocking a place for a child on the waiting list, then they can be given a month's notice to leave Playgroup.

Notice Period

We require a notice period of four weeks, in writing, to the Playgroup Secretary should you wish to remove your child from Playgroup. An email is acceptable and should be sent to info@pencaitlandplaygroup.co.uk. If your child leaves before this notice period, you will be charged for the remaining weeks.

Once notice has been given, the hours will be offered to other children in accordance with our admissions policy. Should you wish to take up the space again you may have to go on the waiting list.

FIRE DRILL

In the event of a fire, the following procedure must be carried out:

Main Playgroup Area

- An adult telephones 999
- All children will be instructed to line up at the fire door. Playgroup leader will collect register. • The Playgroup Assistant will open the fire door and lead the children to the goal posts (straight ahead), with the parent helper following at the end.
- The Playgroup Leader will count the children out and check for children and adults. • The Playgroup Leader is responsible for checking the register at the goal posts. • The Playgroup Leader is responsible for notifying the Fire Officer about details of the fire. • No one must re-enter the building until the Playgroup Leader has been given authorisation from the chief fire officer when it is safe to do so.

Top Changing Room

- If the fire alarm should sound, the staff member should line the children up at the fire door exit.
- The staff member will open the door.
- The children will march out and join the other members of the group at the goals at the bottom of the field where the Playgroup Leader will check the register.
- All children will remain safely with the Playgroup Assistant and Helper while the Playgroup Leader speaks to the Fire Officer.
- No one must re-enter the building until the Playgroup leader has been given authorisation from the Chief Fire Officer to do so.

CONCLUSION

We are aware that we provide the first steps of early years' education when children are moving away from their parents towards independence for the first time.

We hope that our children leave Playgroup with confidence as they move to Nursery or School.

It is our intention that we can continue to do so for another twenty years with the support and help of parents and friends in the community.

FREQUENTLY ASKED

What will happen on the first day?

You will be welcomed by one of our two fully trained staff members. You will be asked to stay until your child is confident without you.

Are the staff securely screened?

Yes, all staff members of staff have up to date Disclosure Scotland checks in accordance with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme.

Do I need to bring anything for my child?

A change of clothes, nappies, wipes, nappy sacks (if required) in a named bag which can be left at Playgroup. Please bring a coat/jacket as we do sometimes go outside. All items should be labelled with your child's name. Spare nursery clothes are available if required.

How do I pay for each session?

You will receive an invoice by email from our Treasurer each month. Our preferred method of payment is by bank transfer (sort code 832725, bank account 00236193, ref child's name).

Do I need to notify anybody if my child cannot attend, and do I still have to pay? Yes, please email the Play Leader or call the Playgroup. We do require payment even if a child does not attend, as that place cannot be made available to another child.

Do I have to provide a drink or food for my child?

No, your session fee includes a healthy snack, and a drink of milk or water, so please let staff know if your child has any special dietary needs.

What if my child is not yet toilet trained?

Please let the staff know and provide spare nappies or pull ups (whichever you prefer your child to wear), wipes and nappy bags.

Is Playgroup a charity and what can I do to help?

Yes we are registered through OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator). We are always looking for new committee members to join us and for individuals who have skills to help us raise money. The fees that we charge do not fully cover our overheads so fundraising is essential for Playgroup's survival. Please participate in as many fundraising events as you can.

Do parents have to be part of the rota?

Yes, to enable the Playgroup to operate we need one parent to help per session. We always leave one child's space available in case you need to bring a younger sibling with you.

What if I am on the rota to be on duty and am unable to attend?

We have a Parents WhatsApp group, please post there so that a swap can be arranged. If you are unable to swap we will have to close the playgroup on that day.

What if I am not happy with some aspect of the Playgroup?

Please contact the Play Leader or the Playgroup Chairperson.

We hope this is a help to you but feel free to contact us if you have any other questions.

WHAT TO BRING ON THE FIRST DAY

- Completed Registration Form *(if not already returned)*
- Completed Parental/Carer Questionnaire *(if not already returned)*
- Bag with the child's name on for spare clothes etc.
- Coat/Jacket
- Spare change of clothes
- Spare Nappies/Pull Ups
- Wipes
- Nappy Sacks