

Grovelands Childcare January Re-opening



Dear Parents,

We hope you all had a happy and healthy Christmas.

As you are no doubt aware, we find ourselves again in Level 5 restrictions. In line with Level 5 advice from NPHE, childcare facilities remain open and safe for children to attend. On that basis Grovelands will re-open on 4th January 2021.

As part of the new measures, the government decided to delay the reopening of schools until the 11th of January for the safety of children, staff and their families. The deferral is also aimed at decreasing the spread of the virus and attempts at flattening the curve before reopening. We were however concerned that the government had decided to take a different approach for early years services which are deemed essential.

Many stakeholders were concerned with aspects of the latest government decision to postpone the re-opening of schools while at the same time allowing childcare facilities to re-open. These concerns were brought to emergency meetings of the Advisory Board to DCEDIY (of which MD Regina Bushell is a member) which was attended by Minister O’Gorman. The government was requested to reconsider this decision and align re-opening with that of schools. We are glad to report that sectoral concerns were taken on board and we attach a copy of this evening’s press release for your information. This confirms the Minister has agreed with his Cabinet colleagues that the pre-school programme (ECCE) can resume at a slightly later date of 11th January 2021.

Grovelands was amongst the first services to reopen last June and our team have done a phenomenal job of keeping your children and families safe. This is evident in the excellent results in our recent Tusla COVID-19 inspections. However, we must all recognise that we are not where we were last June or even where we were when we closed our doors for the Christmas break. With the exponential growth of the virus in our communities, we feel we have to take firm action in the best interests of your children and our staff.

While we will reopen on January 4th for full day care, we would request that you consider whether it is really essential for your child/ren to be in attendance from the 4th - 8th of January. As schools are closed there will also be no afterschool or transport services operating. We want to give our services a fighting chance to remain open during this third wave. The best way of doing that is at a greatly reduced capacity initially after re-opening while we wait to see the impact of the new measures prior to 11th January.

We confirm that, only children attending *next week* will be required to pay fees in full for January. Direct Debits will be collected as normal for January with the necessary credits being applied to February fees in agreement with parents.

We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this will cause to you but we feel that we are acting in the best interests of the health and safety of your children, your

families and our staff. As this is a very volatile situation, we may have to swiftly change our position if further guidelines issue or new restrictions are imposed. We will continue to keep you updated as we have at all stages of this pandemic. We all remain in this together.

In summary:

- **ECCE only all centres will remain closed until January 11 at the earliest.**
- **Afterschool all centres will remain closed until January 11th at the earliest.**
- **Full daycare (IDA Athlone, IDA Tullamore, Corran Riada & Mullingar) will open on January 4th for essential service only.**

If it is essential for your child to attend next week or should you have any questions in relation to this letter please email covid@grovelandschildcare.ie Please include your child's name and which of our services they attend and remember we are here to help if you have any further queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Regina, Ronan and Deirdre Bushell

Directors of Grovelands Childcare