



Parent/Carer Handbook 2023



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Hopefield Castle Nursery:

Nurturing communication and learning through natural play in a creative and caring environment

Welcome

Welcome to Hopefield Castle Nursery's Parent/Carer Handbook. We understand what an important decision choosing a nursery is for you, and we are delighted that you have chosen us.

Hopefield Castle Nursery is an indoor-outdoor nursery for children aged 2-5 years, set in a beautiful 17th century fairytale castle with 1.3 acres of secure grounds. We are open 7.30am until 6pm Monday to Friday all year round. Funded places are available for eligible 2 year olds and all 3-5 year olds (up to 30 free hours per week). We have two bright and spacious playrooms, the Griffins (2s and 3s) and the Dragons (3-5s), along with a separate sensory room.

We are situated on the edge of Bonnyrigg, conveniently located for commuter routes and train stations to the city or the Borders. We are within short walking distance of the Hopefield estate as well as many other new and established residential areas. We have ample parking available within the grounds for safe drop off and pick up. As well as having extensive grounds within the nursery setting for the children to explore, there are many local parks and amenities within walking distance. We ensure that our children learn through experience, giving them opportunities to get involved in the local community, with regular trips and a strong link between home and nursery. We run Forest Kindergarten sessions regularly and we will continue our pioneering Intergenerational Project with visits to a local care home. We have a walkthrough video and drone overhead footage of the setting on our website:

www.hopefieldcastlenursery.com and on our Facebook page.

Your child is very important to us. We understand that children are unique individuals, and our staff strive to assist them in reaching their full potential. Developing trusting relationships with others is vital to becoming secure and confident people. Early Years research

has shown that children who have enjoyed the benefits of a good nursery demonstrate better social and emotional wellbeing at school. The ability to make friends and cooperate with others even from a very early age are both essential skills for future success and happiness. The role of our staff is extremely important not only to us but also to the wellbeing of the children. Our staff are carefully selected for their common sense, natural aptitude for early learning and childcare and fun-loving outlook on life. All staff at Hopefield are either qualified and experienced Nursery Practitioners, or studying towards their childcare qualification. We aim to provide the best for your child and that means providing all the opportunities possible for our staff to be all they can be too. You can find out more about our significant investments in staff training later in this handbook and on our website.



About Us

The Hopefield Castle Nursery Ethos – An Invitation to Play
Our ethos is based on the latest in Early Years research, that children learn best through natural play, exploration and language, using open-ended and natural resources, which allow their imaginations to flourish. Our skilled staff use their observation skills and knowledge of child development in the planning and preparation of daily experiences. Our team have a thorough knowledge and understanding of each child and tailor experiences that they will

benefit from. We follow the children's interests in order to develop their learning. We believe in active, creative learning through free-flow play.

Our vision and values are:

- ✓ To meet the individual needs of all children to ensure their health and wellbeing, by observing, monitoring and evaluating their progress and development; particularly focusing on their speech, language and communication development
- ✓ To provide learning experiences based on the children's ideas and interests, the natural flow of the seasons and the skilful nurturing and support of our trained Early Years Educators; including a focus on outdoor learning through Forest Kindergarten
- ✓ To provide a safe and secure, yet welcoming and open environment, in which children will thrive, parents/carers will feel included and staff will feel supported and valued
- ✓ To recognise and respect the value of parents'/carers' input, and encourage them to share in their children's learning
- ✓ To promote positive attitudes to diversity and difference, helping children to learn and value different aspects of their own and others' lives by engaging them with their local community, particularly focusing on Intergenerational Practice within the community
- ✓ To improve our service through reflective self-evaluation

Parents as Partners

At Hopefield Castle Nursery, our partnership with parents is fundamental to the wellbeing of the children. We consult with parents as well as the children regularly about the running of the nursery, and provide regular newsletters and questionnaires so that we can gain parents' views and keep them up to date with nursery goings-on. We use highly secure online nursery management software and an App called Family so that parents can log on and see their child's daily diary and observations. Parents can access Family from anywhere at any time of day using their personal secure username and password/PIN. We also keep our website and Facebook page regularly and appropriately updated, to keep parents informed about the exciting experiences that their children have been taking part in each week.

We have a parent/carer notice board at the entrance to the nursery (with useful information such as menus, planning, and staff photos). Parents are encouraged to nominate a member of staff for our Star of the Month award.

Outdoor Learning

At Hopefield Castle Nursery we focus on outdoor learning, with free flow play to our large garden areas. Our gardens provide copious opportunities for natural imaginative play, including planting areas, dens, large sand pits, water rill, mud kitchens, bug hotels, wildlife area, and loose parts play. We even have our own wooded area for Forest Kindergarten experiences. We believe that effectively using our outdoor environment:

- ✓ Improves **health and wellbeing**
- ✓ Enhances **learning experiences**
- ✓ Helps to build **confidence and self-esteem**
- ✓ Encourages children to **care for the environment**
- ✓ Improves **language and communication, social skills and teamwork, motivation and concentration, and physical and motor skills**



Communication Skills

Speech, language and communication are vital building blocks for other areas of development. These skills come first, and need to be in place to enable children to build on them. Led by our Director, a qualified **Speech and Language Therapist**, we focus on the development of communication skills from a very early age, with staff using Signalong (signing & speech) as a bridge to spoken language. Children benefit from age and stage appropriate speech, language and communication groups with our staff, developing vital skills such as **turn-taking, eye contact, concentration, cooperation and sharing.**

Promoting Positive Behaviour

At Hopefield Castle Nursery we promote positive behaviour by creating an environment which consistently encourages and reinforces good behaviour. We show respect and consideration to each child and promote responsibility and honesty.

- ✓ We **listen to people**
- ✓ We are **honest**
- ✓ We are **kind and helpful**
- ✓ We are **gentle**
- ✓ We **try our best**
- ✓ We **look after things**

Keyworker System

Every child who attends Hopefield Castle Nursery is special and we believe in supporting each child individually. The Keyworker system is an effective method of childcare and development in the early years in terms of staff's knowledge of the children, physical and emotional support, and parent-nursery communication. Therefore each child is assigned a Keyworker to ensure continuity of care and learning.

Community Involvement ~ Intergenerational Project

At our sister nursery in Gorebridge, we run a pioneering Intergenerational Project with our local care home, for which we won an award at the Generations Working Together conference. We visit the care home every week with different age groups of children, and we also run a Pen Pal scheme between our Early Learners and the residents. Please have a look at our website or Facebook page for further details.



Early Learning and Childcare

Curriculums – Learning Through Play

Hopefield Castle Nursery supports children in all aspects of our daily routines and has the flexibility to include the personal needs of individual children regardless of their age. We follow the guidance set out in the *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Families and Children* curriculum for our younger children.

Educational theorists are looking with a renewed focus at the area of pre-birth to three years because of a growing recognition of the importance of the earliest months and years of a child's development. The document draws upon national and international research throughout with effective support and learning opportunities for very young children. The four key aspects are

- ✓ Rights of the Child
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Responsive Care
- ✓ Respect

Hopefield Castle Nursery follows the recommendations of the *Curriculum for Excellence* to plan our Early Learners' curriculum activities and experiences. The various experiences offer children the opportunity to develop skills in areas which are essential to school life and beyond, while still focusing on natural and imaginative play. The aim of our Early Learners programme is to develop each child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual skills, through participation in exciting and stimulating experiences. Although we plan ahead for activities and outings, we also leave time for **responsive planning** for any activities that the children may have developed an interest in.

When planning, we consider all of the following:

- ✓ Play and Exploration – in their play children's learning is most effective, as play reflects their wide ranging interests and captures their imaginations.
- ✓ Active Learning – Children need physical and mental challenges in order to learn.
- ✓ Creative and Critical Thinking – Children discover connections when they have opportunities to play with different ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources.
- ✓ Areas of Learning and Development – All areas of learning and development are connected and must be incorporated into planning – personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; and physical development.

Food and Nutrition

We have a very experienced nursery cook at Hopefield Castle Nursery who prepares delicious and nutritious meals and snacks for the children. We use the government's "Setting the Table" guidelines to inform our healthy menu choices. Our menu changes weekly and is always displayed in the nursery. We can accommodate a whole range of dietary requirements and allergies.

AM nursery sessions (and all day sessions) include breakfast and a home-cooked healthy two course lunch.

PM nursery sessions (and all day sessions) include a substantial snack at around 3.30pm.



Getting Ready For Nursery

Starting nursery is a very exciting time and something that we hope you and your child can look forward to. We recommend lots of smiles, positive talk about going to nursery and confidence in preparation. This can be passed on so easily to your child and helps them settle in. Staff can also stay in touch with you during the early days at regular intervals with a quick call to let you know how your child's day is going. You will be given a full handover at the end of each day too.

Settling In Procedures

We include two 1 hour settling in sessions at the nursery with your registration fee. The first visit is for you to give us some information about your child and for us to discuss all the key things we need to know, and to give you and your child a feel for the nursery. The second settling in session is for your child to come in and find their feet – to explore their surroundings and meet their new friends.

Parents are welcome to stay near the nursery, or go home for this session. We acknowledge that every child is different and we will work with parents and children to make sure that they enjoy their time with us and get used to the nursery environment at their own pace.



What to Bring on Your First Day

- ✓ Change of clothes - clearly labelled with your child's name
- ✓ Seasonal items - Sun hat for summer; hat and gloves for winter
- ✓ Wellington boots
- ✓ Comforters if required - dummies/soft toys

We provide a waterproof suit for each child throughout their time at nursery, the cost of which is included in the registration fee.

Children should not attend nursery in their best clothes. We like our messy play indoors and outdoors, and while we do have painting aprons, some children get very messy! We have nursery uniform which parents can purchase for their children – please ask for further details.



Admissions

Children are offered places on a first come, first served basis, depending on sessions required and sessions available. Where possible, priority will be given to those who have siblings already at the nursery. Priority will also be given to families who require 3-5 full days per week in particularly busy rooms. The minimum number of sessions per week is either one full day and one half day, or three half days per week, in order to help your child to settle at nursery. If a place is not currently available for your child for your desired sessions, we may be able to offer alternative sessions, or we can place their name on our waiting list. We work in partnership with Midlothian Council to provide 1140 hours per year funded childcare places for eligible 2-5 year olds – please ask for further information.

Please email or phone to make an appointment to view the nursery in advance of visiting. Following a visit, if you would like to take up a place, we ask you to **complete your child's details on the Family link that we send to you**, and pay the registration fee of £75, and refundable deposit of £50 (which is refunded providing one month's notice of leaving the nursery is given).

Nursery Fees and Sessions:

AM (7.30am ~ 1.00pm)	£34.50
PM (1.00pm ~ 6.00pm)	£33.20
Full Day (7.30am ~ 6.00pm)	£60.50
Additional hours (where available)	£9 per hour

We offer a 5% discount for full time nursery attendance. Our fees include meals, snacks, and baby care items (nappies, wipes etc). Hopefield Castle Nursery closes for one week in the year – between Christmas and New Year, hence the fees are calculated over 51 weeks and divided into 12 equal monthly payments.

It is important to note that nursery fees are based on sessions booked, not sessions that are attended. All absences must be paid for. One month's notice or payment in lieu is required if you decide to leave the nursery. Every month nursery fees will remain the same unless extra sessions are required.

Your child's nursery fees are due in advance on the 1st day of every month. Payment methods are by standing order and/or childcare vouchers/Tax Free Childcare. **Any extra sessions booked should be paid for by online banking at the time of booking /confirming the session.**

We accept all types of childcare vouchers and government tax free childcare. If you are paying by childcare vouchers they should reach us by the 15th of the month. If they are paid later they are credited to your account for the following month's fees.

We appreciate you arriving on time to collect you child. If there are incidents which result in late collection of your child, the nursery must be contacted. Continued late arrival will result in a charge of £10.00 for every 10 minutes.

Please note that deposits are refundable providing that one month's notice is given of withdrawing your child from the nursery; however the registration fee is non-refundable. One month's notice will be given before any fee increase is implemented. We support working families at Hopefield Castle Nursery, and are happy to advise about help with childcare costs such as grant funding, tax credits, Universal Credit and childcare vouchers/tax free childcare.

Policies and Procedures

Monitoring Quality

Quality assurance of the early learning and childcare we provide is vital to the success of our nursery, and we achieve this in the following ways:

- ✓ We receive external validation via inspection from the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland. A summary of development plans along with recent reports are available to parents/carers.
- ✓ We use the *How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare* document to self-evaluate our practice and draw up an annual Improvement Plan/Standards and Quality Report based upon this evaluation.
- ✓ We use the new *Realising the Ambition – Being Me* document to inform our daily practice.
- ✓ We welcome suggestions from children, parents and staff.
- ✓ We train our staff to the highest standards, ensuring that they are responsive, affectionate and interested Practitioners, and we take every opportunity to share good practice.

Safe Recruitment

Hopefield Castle Nursery is an equal opportunities employer and has a rigorous safe recruitment and selection process. Staff also complete a thorough induction and probationary period. All prospective staff must have PVG disclosure checks, and be SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) registered. Our recruitment process is open, accountable, transparent and anti-discriminatory.

Staff Development and Specialist Training

Hopefield Castle Nursery has made significant investments in staff training. Our mandatory training includes First Aid, Child Protection, Food Hygiene, and Health & Safety training. We obtain training packages from external agencies (e.g. Promoting Positive

Behaviour; Partnership with Parents; GIRFEC; Curriculum for Excellence; Pre-Birth to Three; Realising the Ambition), as well as doing in-house Forest Kindergarten/Outdoor Learning training, and of course specialist Speech, Language and Communication Development training from our Director who is a qualified Speech and Language Therapist.



Many of our staff have also been trained to Foundation level in Signalong, and we use signing at the nursery alongside speech as a bridge to spoken language for the younger children. Young children are capable of signing long before they can use verbal language to make themselves understood, so frustration at not being able to communicate effectively can be dramatically reduced, leading to a calmer nursery environment where every child can play and learn at their own pace.

Our exceptional staff team each have their own special interest or talent which is celebrated and shared for the benefit of everyone at the nursery (e.g. outdoor learning; music etc). Each Practitioner is valued for their own skills and knowledge, and is given their own responsibility so that we can all contribute to effective leadership within the nursery (e.g. Eco-Coordinator; Outdoor Learning Coordinator).

Staff meetings take place once a month to ensure the whole team are kept informed of relevant information affecting the nursery. They cover planning, new staff, new children, operational reports from the different playrooms and management, feedback from staff attending training courses, new topics, recent inspections, and other

special events. Staff are also encouraged to talk about ideas that may improve our service, or to voice a concern. All of our staff also take part in regular meetings with management to review and evaluate training needs. It is essential that we evaluate our investment in training and development. The feedback of that evaluation will help to discuss training undertaken and consider how the learning gained has been integrated into working practice.

Equal Opportunities

Hopefield Castle Nursery promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from any discrimination on the grounds of race, age, ethnic origin, gender, social background, sexuality, marital status, disability, religion, political beliefs or any other unjustifiable factors.

Staff actively promote a positive ethos and raise awareness of diversity.

Child Protection

Hopefield Castle Nursery is committed to ensuring that each child's welfare and development is paramount. We have a robust Child Protection Policy which adheres to local and national guidelines. We are also committed to the national *Getting it Right for Every Child* policy (<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>). We have a designated Child Protection Officer (Marie Arthur) who has undergone specialist CP Lead training and whose name is displayed on the parent notice board, along with our CP procedure. All staff receive training in child protection during their induction period and an annual review of child protection training will be held. Our Child Protection Policy will be provided to parents/carers upon registration with the nursery via a link on our website.

Confidentiality

Personal information is confidential. Trust between Hopefield Castle Nursery staff and service users is essential if an effective service is to be delivered. Sharing confidential information with others is permitted only in the following circumstances:

- ✓ Consent is given
- ✓ It is required by Law
- ✓ It is considered to be in the Public Interest (in order to prevent serious harm, injury, or damage to the service user, child, carer or to any other person)

The decision to share information must only be made by the management.

Health and Safety

Hopefield Castle Nursery is committed to providing for the health, safety and welfare of all staff and children in our care and to maintaining standards equal to best practice in the industry. Our Health and Safety Policy is available for all parents/carers and staff to see.

Fire emergency procedure

Hopefield Castle Nursery has a fire precaution policy and fire evacuation procedure in place. All staff will be aware of this policy and procedure and their specific responsibilities. Fire drills are carried out regularly to ensure all staff and children are familiar with what to do in the event of the fire alarm sounding.

Accident and Incident log

All accidents and incidents are recorded on our management system and electronically signed by the member of staff, member of management and parent or carer. The log is reviewed regularly to ensure there are no common risk areas.

Risk Assessments

Hopefield Castle Nursery has identified the main risks associated with its operations. We carry out risk assessments daily and weekly along with more formal assessments annually. These are regularly reviewed and cover potential risks to children, staff and visitors.

Use of Cameras

Photographs are used extensively throughout Hopefield Castle Nursery for a variety of purposes, but generally to capture a particular experience or something that the child has achieved for their Learning Journey on Family.

Parents/Carers are not permitted to take photographs on the nursery premises without permission.

Kitchen

Our fully-equipped nursery kitchen is regularly inspected by Environmental Health to ensure it meets health, hygiene and food standards, and Hopefield Castle Nursery has a certificate to prove that this standard has been met. Our nursery cook has many years' experience working in nurseries and schools, and all staff involved in preparing food/snacks are trained to Basic Food Hygiene level.

Security

Hopefield Castle Nursery is accessed through a gated entrance. We have a secure video entryphone system for the building, connected to each of the playrooms and the office. **Parents/carers must not keep the door open for other parents/carers, but rather wait until contact has been made with that parent/carer by staff. CCTV operates within both buildings and grounds.** The extensive nursery grounds are surrounded by secure 6ft fencing for the safety of the children and to allow free-flow play throughout the garden areas.

Visitors to Hopefield Castle Nursery must sign in using the visitors' book, and sign out again when they leave. If they have an appointment, are attending a staff interview, or viewing the nursery for their child then management will be directly responsible for them during their visit. Visitors are not left alone with the children under any circumstances.

As part of the enrolment procedure, parents/carers are asked to provide details of all contacts who may pick up their child via Family. In addition, Hopefield Castle Nursery operate a secure password system, so the password should be shared with any contacts named on this list.

Other Policies and Procedures

We have a range of detailed policies and procedures at Hopefield Castle Nursery, which parents/carers can read on our website following registration at the nursery. A copy of these is also provided in the nursery office.

