

## What are Síolta and Aistear?

Síolta and Aistear are the National Frameworks for Early Learning which support services for children aged from birth to 6 years. Detailed information can be found at [www.siolta.ie](http://www.siolta.ie) and [www.ncca.ie/earlychildhoodframework](http://www.ncca.ie/earlychildhoodframework).

### Contact details for the City and County Childcare Committees:

If you would like further information regarding the free Pre-School Year scheme you should contact your local City and County Childcare Committee.

Carlow	059 91 40244
Cavan	049 95 29882
Clare	065 68 64862
Cork City	021 45 07942
Cork County	022 23 880
Donegal	074 91 32416
Dublin City	01 54 24100
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	01 23 68030
Fingal	01 80 77660
Galway	091 75 2039
Kerry	066 71 81582
Kildare	045 86 1307
Kilkenny	056 77 52865
Laois	057 86 61029
Leitrim	071 96 40870
Limerick City	061 40 7525/7527
Limerick County	061 60 0918
Longford	043 42505
Louth	041 68 59912
Mayo	094 90 47010
Meath	046 90 73010
Monaghan	047 72896
North Tipperary	067 44888
Offaly	057 91 35878
Roscommon	094 96 22540
Sligo	071 91 48860
South Dublin	01 457 0122
South Tipperary	052 82274
Waterford City	051 860444
Waterford County	058 43601
Westmeath	044 93 35454
Wexford	053 92 37156
Wicklow	0404 64455



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## GUIDE FOR PARENTS TO THE free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)





## What is the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)?

The ECCE is a new scheme designed to give children access to a free Pre-School Year of appropriate programme-based activities in the year before they start primary school. Participation in a pre-school programme provides children with their first formal experience of early learning, the starting-point of their educational and social development outside the home. Children who avail of pre-school are more likely to be ready for school and a formal learning and social environment.

## Will my child be eligible?

The ECCE is open to all children aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months on 1 September each year. To avail of the free pre-school year in January 2010, children must have been born between 2 February 2005 and 30 June 2006. To avail of the year in September 2010, children must have been born between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007.

## Where can I enrol my child for the free Pre-School Year?

There are nearly 5,000 pre-school services notified to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or registered with the Irish Montessori Educational Board (IMEB). All of these are eligible to apply to participate in the scheme. A list of those accepted under the scheme

will be available for parents from their local City and County Childcare Committee from October 2009. Parents can contact listed services in their area at that time to arrange for enrolment. If your child is already attending a pre-school service, or will be from September 2009, whether it is a playschool or a full or part-time daycare service, you can also ask the service provider if they plan to participate in the scheme.

The upper age limit of 4 years 6 months will be extended where a child cannot start primary school until s/he is more than 5 years 6 months of age, due to either the enrolment policy of the local schools or having been assessed as developmentally delayed.

## How is the Pre-School Year funded?

Services participating in the scheme will be paid a capitation fee for each qualifying child enrolled. In return, the service will be required to provide an appropriate programme of activities in early childhood care and education (ECCE) which will be free to parents. While the pre-school year will normally commence in September of each year, a shorter period will apply for those attending from January 2010.

## How will the Pre-School Year be provided?

Children attending a full or part-time service will normally receive pre-school year sessions for 2 hours 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week over 50 weeks. To facilitate parents whose children attend a full or part-time service for only 3 days a week, the service may provide 3 daily sessions of 3 hours 45 minutes each week. The weekly capitation fee in these cases will be €48.50. Children availing of the free pre-school year during January to August 2010 will receive 34 rather than 50 weeks of free pre-school.

Children attending a sessional playschool service, typically provided for about 3 hours each day, will normally receive pre-school year sessions for 3 hours

a day, 5 days a week over 38 weeks. Sessional playschool services which are unable to open 5 days a week, can apply to provide the pre-school year in the form of 3 hours 30 minutes a day, 4 days a week over 41 weeks. Children availing of the free pre-school year during January to June 2010 will receive 23 rather than 38 weeks of free pre-school. The weekly capitation fee in these cases will be €64.50.

Some sessional playschools may choose to open for 50 weeks in the year rather than 38, in which case they will provide daily sessions of 2 hours 15 minutes, and full or part-time services may choose to also provide sessional playschool services in which case the 38 week model will apply.

## Will parents have to pay additional charges to the service for the free Pre-School Year?

No, services which participate in the scheme must provide the pre-school year free to parents. A service may charge parents for additional services as long as (a) these are provided on an optional basis and (b) appropriate programme based activities are provided to children not participating in an optional activity.

For example, a service can offer an additional activity such as music or dance which parents can choose to avail of for a charge. If they do not wish to avail of this activity, their child must continue to be provided with an appropriate alternative activity. Services can also charge for hours which are additional to the free pre-school provision e.g. if a child is in a full-day service for 10 hours, a parent should expect to pay for the 7 hours, 45 minutes per day which are not free. An additional 30 minutes per day, which would be charged for, may be offered to a child in a sessional playschool. Outings, birthday parties, snacks, etc can also be charged for, provided they are optional for parents.