

Early Childhood Care and Education Authority

**Norms & Standards
for
Pre-primary Education**

2013

BUILDING

There are many different kinds of building used for pre-primary schools. They may be different in size, shape, the number of windows available, storage space, toilet and kitchen facilities and outdoor play space.

Some buildings are purposely built for young children and they have child's size toilets, child height windows, and space is designed so that children can move easily between indoors and outdoors play.

1. GENERAL

MANDATORY NORMS

- The building should be of sound and stable structure and suitable for providing pre-school services and is in accordance with appropriate regulations in force in Mauritius.
- Should have a Building and Land Permit, Fire Clearance Permit and Health Clearance.
- Be used exclusively for the purpose of preschool education and related services.
- Can be run at both ground level and first floor, subject to safety norms and standards
- Be completely separated from personal residence with no access door between pre-primary school and the residence
- Have the floor covered with impervious materials, smooth and kept clean at all times and provide opportunities for play activities and floor sitting.
- Ensure enough free moving space for children
- Have enough windows to allow fresh air and natural lighting.
- Provision for ramps, handrails and other related facilities to meet needs of children with disabilities.
- Be well maintained and clean
- Ensure that building is free from toxic materials(E.g. Asbestos)
- Preprimary school should operate mainly at ground level but incase classes are being run at first floor, it should operate according to established guidelines

Wherever we are and whatever kind of building we work in, all children have basic health, safety and educational needs that we must try to satisfy.

2. THE CEILING

MANDATORY NORMS

School should ensure that provision is made for a false ceiling if the building is a made of corrugated iron sheet

3. WATER SUPPLY AND ELECTRICITY

MANDATORY NORMS

- Pre-primary schools shall make provision for running water and water storage system
- Electrical installation should not be at children's level and should be secured.

4. SWIMMING POOLS & PONDS

MANDATORY NORMS

- Any body of water, including swimming pools, ponds should be covered and properly fenced.

Furniture is an important contributing factor for the welfare and well being of the child. Educators and School Attendants should always keep in mind that young children need proper postures for the normal physical and physiological development of children. It has been observed that quite a number of health problems in young children are the outcome of poor postures and developmentally inappropriate furniture. A child who feels comfortable is more likely to concentrate in learning activities.

MANDATORY NORMS

Every pre-school should have the following:

S.N	Items	Specifications
1.	Chairs	Height: 53 cm, Width 27cm, Depth 23cm Infant chairs, tables can be wooden and/or plastics
2.	Tables	Length: 120 cm, Min Height 48cm, Width 70 cm Infant chairs, tables can be wooden and/or plastics
3.	Dividers or separators	Divider or separator can be used to limit space
4.	Shelves	75 cm high
5.	Individual hangers	75 cm from ground level
6.	Whiteboards	At children's level and free from light refraction
7.	Mattresses	Soft and comfortable
8.	Cupboards	Adult size
9.	Notice boards	Adult level

All furniture should be durable convenient, safe, sturdy, well balance with rounded corners and painted in attractive non-toxic lead free paints.

FOOD PROGRAM/BASIC KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

MANDATORY NORMS

All Pre-primary schools should

- have at least one microwave and one fridge;
- abide to the food regulations of relevant Authorities;
- have authorization from the Ministry of Health & Quality of Life to run a food program.

PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS

Play is a natural way through which young children learn and construct their thinking. It fosters their imagination and sharpens the skills to interact with their natural, social and cultural environment. Every pre-school center should ensure that children have access to a variety of developmentally, culturally and educationally appropriate set of educational toys, make believe/ play corners, equipment and materials that will satisfy their curiosity as well as the need to explore and discover.

1. PLAY CORNERS

MANDATORY NORMS

It is mandatory for every school to have at least 2 Activity Corners including a reading corner for Early Years Literacy Programme.

All Play Corners should be open and accessible to children.

The following are suggested play corners with a list of minimum required props for a group of 25 children

S.N.	CORNERS	PROPS
1.	Doll	Dolls, mirror, baby cot, ironing board, iron, kitchen utensils, clothing, make-up kit, soft toys, cushions etc..
2.	Shop	Scale, price lists, counting machines, etc....
3.	Reading	Variety of books (picture books/story books) in different languages
4.	Creativity	Paints, paint brush, scissors, paper, waste materials, plasticine, pieces of wood, modeling clay, glue etc.
5.	Pretend Play	Old clothes, shoes, hats, bags, jewel. A mirror safely protected by a frame and fixed on the wall.
6.	Sand	2 sets of sand play toys
7.	Water	2 sets of water play toys
8.	Music	2 sets of each musical instrument: triangle, castagnette maracas, wood block, audio tapes of children's songs in nursery rhymes, poems and stories in different languages, appropriate to the context.
9.	Science: (a) Nature (b) Gardening	Magnet, funnel, magnifying glass, test tubes, cylinder, torch, working clock, old telephone, radio, camera. Flower pots and gardening tools. Two sets of gardening play toys, including miniature watering can and rake, etc...
10.	Puppet	Different types of puppets, puppets stage and additional props.

- **Activity corner should be moveable, culturally appropriate and the props used should not be miniatures, but closer to the reality of daily life experience.**
- **Books selected for young children should be culturally and linguistically appropriate.**

Educators should devise and produce additional learning aids to supplement their programme of activities and the theme in progress.

MANDATORY NORMS

Every Pre-School Center should have sets of educational toys that will foster:

- Language and Communication skills
- Psychomotor Skills
- Mathematical and Logical thinking skills
- Technological and scientific skills
- Creative skills
- Social moral and spiritual values
- Basic literacy skills
- Basic skills in Information Technology

For a group of 25 children, the following minimum is required:

S.N.	ITEMS	QUALITY	TYPES
1.	Puzzles	10	Assorted wooden/plastic/ (6-20 pieces)
2.	Constructive block building	5 sets	Wooden or plastic
3.	Wooden stringing beads	2 sets	Wooden assorted colour
4.	Peg boards	4	Wooden/plastic (assorted colours)
5.	Barrels games	6 sets	Assorted circle, triangle, square, rectangle)
6.	Lego	5 sets	Assorted (big/small)
7.	Abacus	5 sets	Assorted colours
8.	Logic Blocks	5 sets	Assorted colour/size
9.	Domino games	3 sets	With different attributes and themes (assorted)
10.	Lotto games	5 sets	Assorted
11.	Sequential games	2 sets	Assorted
12.	Small cars/trucks	1 set	Plastic & wooden

In line with article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child all educators have an obligation to ensure that young children have access and enough time to play and participate in recreational and cultural activities.

To ensure that learning is channeled through the different sensory modes, a variety of developmentally, educationally and culturally appropriate materials are needed. It is essential that children be given daily opportunities to be involved in drawing, painting, modeling and other creative art activities.

MANDATORY NORMS

All Pre-primary School should also have:

- sufficient quantity of play materials for all children:
- Appropriate materials for drawing, writing, painting, modeling and other creative art activities.
- Waste materials that are free from health hazards.

Play materials should be attractive enough and well displayed to invite young children to play independently

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

The Pre-primary program implements that National Curriculum Framework that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas:

- *Social*
- *Emotional*
- *Physical*
- *Language*
- *Cognitive*

MANDATORY NORMS

Social-emotional development

- Children should be provided with varied opportunities to engage, throughout the day with teaching and non teaching staff that are caring, attentive, responsive and facilitate social competences.

Physical development

- Children should be provided with varied opportunities and materials that support fine motor, gross motor, coordination and balancing skills.

Language development

- Children should be provided with varied opportunities to develop competencies in verbal and non-verbal communication, asking and responding to questions and communicating needs, thoughts ideas, experiences, likes, dislikes and interest.

Cognitive development – Early Literacy

Children should have the opportunities to:

- be exposed and become familiar with print;
- be read story books repeatedly;
- explore books quietly;
- Have access to variety of books.

Children should have the opportunities to write:

- copy familiar names, words and sentences;
- with various types of writing equipment;

Children should have the opportunities to read:

- point to letters, words and sentences

Children should have the opportunities to develop maths skills in:

- building understanding of numbers, number names and their relationship to quantities
- categorizing by one or two attributes such as shapes, size, colour

Children should have the opportunities to develop science and technological skills in:

- understanding the world of living things, non- living things through being encourage to think, question and reason.
- having access to computers and microscopes with educators.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Health and safety of young children have been identified as areas of special concern in order to scale up efforts to provide quality, viable and sustainable Early Childhood Education. All children must have the best possible start in life. A child who is in poor health will function at a level considerably lower than that of a healthy child. Children need experiences that extend their knowledge of how to lead healthy lives. As opportunities arise, educators should provide information and experiences that facilitate learning about nutrition, safety and body care.

Health and safety are considered together because of their interrelationship involved. Focusing on safety is essential in all aspects of the Pre-School programme. Educators should ensure that the environment is safe and involve children preserving that safety. By giving children opportunities to be active in maintaining a safe environment for themselves and others, we are thus helping them to become an independent and responsible person.

The effectiveness of action depends on the alert supervision and involvement by educators, which is imperative to safeguard the health and safety of children.

1. HEALTH

MANDATORY NORMS

- Ensure that children have been vaccinated according to Health Regulations.
- Children have individual Health Record Cards (Yellow Card).
- Ensure that all staff have medical clearance as per ECCEA Act Regulation 2011
- Schools have a fully equipped First Aid Box with appropriate materials kept in a safe place.
- Medication is labeled with child's first names and last names, the expiration date of the medication, the instructions on how to administer and store it.
- Lunch baskets to be stored in safe and hygienic places within reach of children.
- Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged food in factory-sealed container.
- Schools are equipped with a fire extinguisher.
- Water tanks should be regularly clean, disinfected
- There should be adequate toddler size toilets and urinals.
- Provisions should be made for wash basins & running water.
- Toilets should be regularly maintained and kept in safe and hygienic condition.
- Toilets should be at reasonable distance from classroom/activity room.
- Adapted toilets for children with special needs.
-

2. SAFETY

MANDATORY NORMS

- Chemicals, detergents and other toxic hazards should be kept under lock and out of reach of children
- Gas cylinder should be kept outside the pre-primary school kitchen and under lock
- No broken, partly damaged, sharp-edged furniture shall be found in a Pre-primary school

3. INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Pre-school teaching and learning practices should:

- a) Provide opportunities for children to experience a variety of Nutritious food by encouraging families to share food common to different cultures
- b) Inform parents about nutritious food choices appropriate to young child through parental empowerment program
- c) Model appropriate hand washing techniques before and after meals , toileting and nose blowing
- d) Encourage the habit of regular tooth brushing after each meal and more importantly before going to bed
- e) Demonstrate personal and oral hygiene skills through storytelling , songs, dramatic play and conversation
- f) Demonstrate strategies /technique that limit the spread of germs such as covering mouth, when sneezing, , do not consume food that drops on the floor or left uncovered
- g) Demonstrate appropriate hygienic behavior during meals such as food handling

THE CEILING

MANDATORY NORMS

School should ensure that provision is made for a false ceiling if the building is a made of corrugated iron sheet

VENTILATION AND LIGHTING

MANDATORY NORMS

The school should have enough windows to allow fresh air and natural lighting

The classrooms should be well ventilated

The building should have suitable and adequate heating, lighting, sanitary accommodation, waste storage and disposal

4.5 TOILET FACILITIES

MANDATORY NORMS

There should be at least 1 toilet of toddler size and 1 wash basin for every 15 children

4.6 MAINTENANCE

MANDATORY NORMS

Toilets should be regularly maintained and kept in safe and hygienic condition

Premises and fittings should be kept in a proper state of repair, in a clean and hygienic condition and protected from infestation

Furniture and play surfaces should be clean, suitable, and non-toxic and retained in a proper state of repair.

4.7 INDOOR SAFETY

It is important for schools to recognize potential hazards with a view to ensure the overall safety of children within the school premises. School should eliminate or control hazards, minimize risk and create and maintains a safe indoor environment

Schools should respond quickly and appropriately to emergencies such as accidents and injuries in indoor environments

MANDATORY NORMS

Therefore school should ensure that:

- Children have safe access into, within and out of the school, toilet and washing facilities.
- There are barriers to balconies, stairways, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, garage and other levels in the school, front and back yard are age appropriate, child proof and self locking.
- Small toy parts, beads, nuts, blind and curtain cords, plastic bags, sandwich bags, balloons and other objects that represent sometimes choking hazards are not put at the disposal of children without supervision.
- Decorations and children's artwork are not placed near ceiling fans, air conditioners or heaters.
- Tacks, pins, and staples are not accessible to children.
- An evacuation plan and emergency contact numbers are displayed in the school and parents are informed about the evacuation procedures.
- Assemble points has been indetfied
- Fire extinguisher, fire exits, smoke detectors, electrical safety switch are available.
- Heaters, coolers, fireplaces, stoves, microwaves, power points, and office equipment guarded and are inaccessible to children
- Hot water supply is regulated and kept below the temperature at which a child can be scalded
- There is gas shed outside for school making use of gas oven.
- Hazardous indoor and outdoor plants are removed or made inaccessible to children.

4.8 FIRST AID KIT

- A First Aid Box should be available and equipped with appropriate materials such as a pair of scissors, Elastoplasts, disinfectant, bandages.
- Educators should have a first aid certificate

Health and Safety guidelines for the holding of classes/ specialized services on first floor

A certain number of safety measures need to be taken when schools are being run on the first floor of a building

MANDATORY NORMS

Managers should take all necessary precautionary measures for the security of children ,staff and parents and ensure that:

- The building is in accordance with the Health and Safety regulations in force in Mauritius
- The sides of every floor balcony and every part of the building where children, staff and parents have access to, should be guarded with a view to protect them from the risk of falling there from
- Classes upstairs are far away from High Tension Electrical Cables.
- The building is used exclusively for the purpose of preschool education and related services. in case school is being run in residential buildings , the school should be completely separated from personal residence
- Blind spots are minimized by the use of convex mirrors for staff to see around corners.
- Drainpipes are covered so that children do not climb on.
- There are no decorative hedges; plant trees at least ten feet from buildings
- All windows and doors should be burglar proof.
- Have enough windows to allow fresh air and natural lighting and classrooms should be well ventilated

STAIRWAYS

- There should be 2 sheltered staircases which are safe and adapted to young children.
- Stairways should be such as to afford safe passage for children , staff and parents
- All steps should be of appropriate dimensions and have the same rise (rise means the vertical distance between the top of a tread and the top of the tread, landing or ramp next above or below it)
- Tiling of steps should be anti-slippery.

- Stairs should have handrails on both sides and should be safe
- Handrails should not constitute a hazard for children.
- Handrails should be constructed and fitted as to be capable of being readily gripped by hand and safely used by parents , staff and parents

FIRE

- The building should have an emerging exit or adequate means of escape in case of fire and a place of safety outside the building.

Every part of a school's premises must allow for the safe escape of the occupants in case of fire.

DRAINAGE

The school must be provided with an adequate drainage system for hygienic purposes and for the general disposal of waste water and surface water.

OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE

Children by nature are active and curious. They need the experiences to discover explore, create, experiment and observe. Children need space where they can *run, jump, hop, skip, crawl, curl, throw, catch* etc. They need the opportunities and the space to organize their own games and routines that involves all these movements.

Healthy children, both in mind and body, are likely to be those who spend a great deal of time outdoor, where they can play actively and imaginatively. Watching the clouds, looking at the trees, observing birds, experimenting with the pattern of light and shadow, feeling the wind on the cheeks, touching the grass under the feet, discovering the many objects found outside, are *enriching sensory, physical, emotional, cognitive and social experiences of wonder*, which are the basis for *learning*.

ALL PRE- SCHOOL CENTERS NEED TO PROVIDE AN OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE THAT ALLOWS CHILDREN TO:

- Experience the freedom of space and fresh air.
- Play safely, without fear and at ease.
- Use and experiment with both soft and vigorous movements.
- Release energy and develop a positive attitude to exercise and active way of life.
- Extend and enrich indoor activity experiences.
- Develop self- confidence and enhance emotional skills.

- Use and develop language in a variety of situations.
- Foster social skills.
- Develop fine, gross, balance and co-ordination skills.
- Acquire a scientific mind.
- Enjoy the funs and pleasures of childhood.

1. OUTDOOR SPACE

The outdoor play space should:

- provide for a clear view for supervision;
- provide for an outdoor play area that is protected by fences or by natural barriers to prevent access to streets and to avoid other dangers, such as pits, water hazards, or wells;
- be equipped with an appropriate covered dustbin;
- be free from physical and health hazards, without stray animals;
- be equipped with outdoor equipments that are regularly maintained;
- be kept clean and tidy.

An outdoor play area extends and enriches the child's indoor experiences, sharpens acquired skills into competencies, and provides an active platform for learning through play.

2. OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

One of the major characteristics of young children is the mobility and the curiosity to physically explore their immediate environment. A well-equipped playground with appropriate props and outdoor equipment will satisfy the child's needs for movement, play and discovery.

Every pre-primary school should have at least:-

- One Swing
- One Slide
- One Climbing frame
- One Sea-saw

Or

A multipurpose/all in one (swing/climbing/tunnel) made of heavy duty plastics/wooden.

1. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

All pre-primary schools should have:

- Administration Register/Phone records of parents/Guardians
- Children attendance Register
- Staff attendance Register
- Occurrence/Log book
- Inspection book
- Visitors book

2. ACCESS TO PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL

- No unregistered or unauthorized person shall have access to the pre-primary school.
- Parents/guardians wishing to have access to the pre-primary school needs to have prior authorization of the Headmaster/Manager.

3. COMMUNICATION FACILITIES

All Pre-primary School should have

- Appropriate means of communication (fixed line, mobile, fax or email)

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM

Developmentally appropriate practice must establish and promote standards of high- quality professional practice, based on the current research, knowledge, and beliefs about child growth, development and education. Efficient pre- school programs must be responsive to the child's cultural and linguistic realities. Quality children's experiences in the early years foster brain development, ensures holistic development of the child, influence children's performance in school and impact positively throughout their life.

MANDATORY NORMS

The pre- school centre should:

- Emphasize on the holistic development of the child (physical, social, emotional and cognitive), in the context of his/her linguistic, cultural and economical environment.
- Have a yearly, term wise, weekly and daily plan of activities, based on the rights of the child with the following approaches:
 - ✓ Project- work approach.
 - ✓ Theme- oriented programs.
 - ✓ Small- group learning.
 - ✓ Activity- based methodology.
 - ✓ Mixed- ability grouping.
 - ✓ Real- life experiences (cooking, woodwork, gardening)
 - ✓ Play-based pedagogy
- Implement the National Curriculum Framework (Pre-primary) & Manual of Activities as a support material to facilitate action-learning.
- Consider welcoming period, lunchtime, attendance- taking, and outdoor play, as important adult involvement pedagogical activity.
- Avoid teacher- oriented activities that focus only on academic achievements.
- Have a balance between free, semi- guided, guided and child- initiated activities.
- Ensure that parental views and involvement are secured in the planning of pre- school programs and the organisation of recreational, cultural and fund- raising activities.
- Ensure that children with special needs are integrated within the normal pre- school setting.
- Use positive reinforcement to motivate children.

Early childhood practices are effective and efficient when programs are fine-tuned to the needs, interest, rights of children and on the way they learn, develop and acquired knowledge at this early age.

MANDATORY NORMS

- All cases of child abuse and ill-treatment should be reported immediately to Authorities concerned.
- Adopt strict disciplinary measures concerning cases of school personnel found guilty of any form of violence or discrimination against a child.
- Take measures to promote non-violence and peace at school.

FAMILY- PRE-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

It is universally agreed that the family is the first social institution responsible for the development and well being of children. Parents are the child's first educators, companion and playmates.

As the family and the early childhood settings have common goals, the development and well being of young children, educators should identify appropriate avenues of collaboration and partnerships with parent to:

- have a shared understanding about each child's experience in the family, the Pre-School settings and the community context
- optimise children's learning and enhance their well being
- meet the varying needs and interest of children and parents
- help parents understand and participate actively in the Pre-School program

Research has shows that active parental involvement in Pre-School activities strengthens the family roles and responsibilities in the education of their children and contribute to positive, long-term effects on the quality of life of families and community.

Making links between the family and the Pre-School setting involves both partners learning from each other. An effective family Pre-School partnership should:

- focus on enhancing children's learning and well being;
- acknowledge and value the variety of parenting styles, social and cultural diversity of families;
- ensure that each parents contribution is valued and be built over time as it requires a lot of ' *give and take between both partners*'.

MANDATORY NORMS

Every Pre-primary School should provide parents with all relevant information on issues regarding:

- the objectives of the pre-primary school;
- conditions of admission and services offered;
- the activity program;
- Parents meeting to be organised at least 3 times a year;
- the organisation of cultural and appropriate pedagogical activities;
- children's progress & development;
- access to their children's portfolio and other relevant information.
- When educators suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this is communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner and is provided with documentation and explanation for the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for assessment.
- To help families with their transitions to other programs or schools, staff provide basic general information on enrolment procedures and practices, visiting opportunities, and/or program options.

Educators should always remember that it is ethical to ensure confidentially on matters pertaining to personal family life.