

# Educational Policy

**2022 – 2026 Updated per November 2023**

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Parents who choose daycare entrust their treasured child to a team of professional caregivers specialized in early learning and healthy child development. It is essential for parents' sense of security and confidence that they know that their child is safe and secure at the children's center. It is essential for the children's sense of security and confidence that they feel a warm welcome. By developing healthy, trusting relationships with their adult caregivers and with other children, they can learn and grow as they explore the world around them, learning through play.

Together, teachers and children create a safe and secure environment within the space provided. An important factor is continuity, and having permanent teachers in the group is the key to achieving this goal. Children build a trusting bond with adults whom they learn to trust, who make them feel safe. We strive to provide a child-friendly environment. We want to provide a sense of security so children have a safe foundation. We want to provide enough challenges, tools and toys to enable and encourage development. It's all about play, having fun and learning through play.

This Education Policy sets out our vision of child development and education, as well as guidelines and procedures we have in place to create a safe, secure environment for children that encourages their development. The policy also helps us to regularly evaluate and improve our methods to reflect current 'best practices' in early learning programs. We focus first on children, on our goals for them and on ways we can best achieve the goals. We safeguard the quality of childcare at The Clown Club through ongoing reflection and discussions between management, the pedagogical coach, teachers and parents.

## **2. Mission and general aims**

The Clown Club was created in 1995 with the aim of supporting and encouraging an intercultural learning process between children, their parents and teachers in a safe and stimulating environment. We have both English- and Dutch- language groups, all of which have children from different cultural backgrounds. Our team is also international. Interaction between the children and the teachers is an important way of sharing this cultural diversity. To stimulate this learning process, the teachers introduce themes that highlight our individuality and our diverse backgrounds, and every year we host an 'International Day' event to familiarize parents and children with different cultural traditions, languages, clothes and foods.

## **3. Group size and structure**

The Clown Club offers places for 82 children divided over 6 groups. The number of children per group meets the norms specified by the Dutch authorities in the *CAO Kinderopvang*<sup>1</sup>.

Babies - Baby's:	0 – 15	months:	6 children	: 2 teachers
English 1 - Toddlers:	10 – 30	months:	14 children	: 3 teachers
English 2 - Preschool:	24 – 60	months:	16 children	: 2 teachers
Dutch 1 - Dreumesen:	10 – 30	months:	15 children	: 3 teachers
Dutch 2 - Peuters:	24 – 48	months:	14 children	: 2 teachers
Dutch 3 - Peuters:	24 – 48	months:	14 children	: 2 teachers

Each group has a maximum number of children per day based on the children's exact ages. The ages at which children move from Babies to Toddlers to Preschool are approximate and may be adjusted to reflect each child's individual developmental needs, as well as practical scheduling options and considerations.

### 3.1 Maximum group size and number of teachers

The ratio between the number of teachers and children in a group is as follows:

- 1 teacher per 3 children present aged 0 to 1 year
- 1 teacher per 5 children present aged 1 to 2 years
- 1 teacher per 8 children present aged 2 to 3 years
- 1 teacher per 8 children present aged 3 to 4 years

The number of teachers in a mixed group is based on the average age, rounded up. There's actually an app in FLEX that determines the exact needs each day.

It is important for children that care is given in a familiar environment, with the same children and the same teachers in the same space. At The Clown Club every child has their own primary group. This means that every group has an established regular group of children and teachers in a permanent room. Before a child starts in a new group, parents are given information about the group in which they will be placed in, and children will visit to get acquainted and ease their adjustment.

If children leave their own group or room temporarily during daily activities, the maximum group size may not apply. For example, two or more groups may play together outside, or two groups may temporarily combine inside as well for certain activities, like when the toddler groups play together under the supervision of teachers from both groups.

#### Teacher planning

Each group has its own permanent teachers, except in the case of illness, leave and holidays. The children are looked after by qualified childcare teachers in accordance with the Dutch childcare standards outlined in the '*CAO Kinderopvang*'. As a recognized center for professional development, The Clown Club may have student

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<sup>1</sup> *CAO Kinderopvang*: a collective agreement that sets out the rules and regulations for childcare.

teachers observing and assisting alongside our many experienced professionals. These students work and learn under the direct supervision of a permanent teacher within their specific group and that of a general student-teaching supervisor. All teachers and student teachers are registered with the national childcare register that completes ongoing security checks. All employees also receive ongoing professional development training and coaching under the supervision of our certified Teacher Trainers and Coaches. The Clown Club's Coaching Policy is available in the office.

If there are fewer children present than the maximum group size (during holiday periods, for example) a group may have just one teacher, or two groups may be combined. If two groups are combined, there will be a familiar teacher from each group present.

During opening hours, for a maximum of three, non-consecutive, hours a day fewer teachers may be present than according to the teacher-child ratio requirements. (Consider the first and last hour of the day when there are few children, and nap time when teachers have their lunch break.) At least half of the number of teachers needed are present at all times. If only one teacher is present, there is at least one other to provide support and backup in the case of an emergency. During a teacher's absence, a familiar substitute or another teacher from The Clown Club will be present in the group.

At the beginning and end of the day as well as during rest times there are fewer teachers present in the group due to the different shifts. At these times, the open-door policy is applied. The two toddler groups may be combined, and the two Dutch preschool groups as well. Babyroom may be combined with English 1 and English 2 may be combined with Dutch 2. From 7:00 until 7:45, the children are under the care of two or more teachers in the Dutch 1 and English 1 groups.

The teachers' lunch breaks fall between 13:00 and 15:00, while the children are sleeping and need less supervision. During this time, there is at least one teacher present in the group.

A teacher begins in every group, every day at 8.00. The next teacher begins at 8.30. When there is a need for a third teacher in a group, this person will begin working at 8.15. In this way, we can avoid that any teacher is alone for longer than is allowed as all the children are not present at 8.30. In the Baby Room the first teacher begins at 7.45 so that the children do not need to be in a different room. The second teacher begins either at 8.30 or 9.30, depending on the number of babies expected to attend that day. From 8.00 there is someone in the office who is able to help out when needed.

Only in Dutch 2 and Dutch 3 is the schedule on Wednesday and Friday different. Due to the smaller number of children attending on those two days, the groups may be combined with a teacher from each present. The first is finished working at 17:00 and the second stays in the group or with the children playing outside until 18:15. After this point, all the groups are combined in accordance with the CAO. Below you will find the above schedule worked out.

Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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Baby Room	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00
Dutch 1	13.00 – 15.00 18.00-18.30	13.00 – 15.00 18.00-18.30	13.00 – 15.00 18.00-18.30	13.00 – 15.00 18.00-18.30	13.00 – 15.00 18.00-18.30
Dutch 2	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00 17.15 – 18.30	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00 17.30-18.30
Dutch 3	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00 17.15 – 18.30	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00 17.30-18.30
English 1	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00
English 2	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00	13.00 – 15.00

Outside the above-mentioned hours, we do not deviate from the teacher/child ratio BKR.

### Care in a different group

Each child has a primary group. In special situations, your child may be moved temporarily, with your permission, into another group. Situations such as swapping days, smaller groups during the holidays, educational reasons (open door policy, the beginning and end of the day), or emergencies, like an ill teacher. In these situations, groups may be combined, with familiar teachers following the familiar daily schedule as expected by the children.

In article 5 section 13 from the “Regeling Kwaliteit Kinderopvang” it states that groups may be combined, and a child may have their care take place in a maximum of one different group, their secondary group. Parents can fill out the form ‘Permission form for your child to be placed in a different group’. When signing this form, they acknowledge that they are aware and agree with above information. The teachers of the group will inform parents of these incidental situations or changes when groups are combined or when your child will play in a different group.

### Students and Teachers in training

The Clown Club is a recognized teaching facility. This means that we regularly have students here during their internship period to observe and learn. These students are placed as extras in the group and are never alone with the children, so always in a fixed group and under supervision of a permanent teacher. The group supervisor instructs and guides the students in the group during the day, and the head student-teaching supervisors assess the students’ finished assignments.

Student teachers-in-training may also follow a work-study path. These employees may be placed as teachers in the group. One of the permanent teachers in the group guides and supervises each such teacher.

## **4. VISION on education and educational responsibility**

Everything we do revolves around the children. Every child is unique and full of potential. A child should be able to develop in an environment in which they feel safe and secure. This is the cornerstone of our vision on education and educational responsibility, informed by professional childcare teachers and management who are open to existing and new theories and methods.

The Clown Club strives to make the children's experience as close as possible to their upbringing at home, with added fun. The daycare center has its own responsibility for raising the children in a group atmosphere that supplements and complements their development at home. On the understanding that parents always have final responsibility, open communication is vital when it comes to collaborating and cooperating with parents to enhance each child's upbringing.

Our Educational Policy is based on the guiding principles of emotional safety and security, respect and self-reliance, space and safety, and interaction within a group.

#### Emotional safety and security

It is important that children can be themselves. We make sure that they are free to experiment with new experiences and relationships and that they feel safe enough to express emotions like anger, sorrow and happiness. We feel it is important for children to interact with the environment in which they are being raised based on their own personal character. This helps them grow and develop into independent and socially- and emotionally- skilled people. Communication plays a key role at all times. We try to use words for emotions as well as plenty of non-verbal communication. At our bilingual childcare center this aspect is given an extra dimension. It is also important that each child is familiar with the space and the manner in which we provide care. To guarantee this emotional safety, we do our utmost best to have the same teachers and children present.

#### Respect and independence

Every child has the right to unconditional acceptance. This makes them feel safe enough to accept themselves and the others just as they are, boosting self-respect and enabling them to develop their own personal competencies. Children have the right to respect and must be given the space they need to develop in their own way. They must also be encouraged to make independent choices and to take initiative. We stimulate this by letting the children do as much as possible by themselves and letting them ask for help if they need it. Of course, it is sometimes necessary to intervene and prohibit certain behavior if it affects the safety of others.

#### Space and safety

At The Clown Club, we feel it is important to give children a safe and secure environment in which they can develop to their fullest. This space needs to be safe and offer challenges so that children feel invited to explore and discover. We furnish this space to accommodate different activities, including the opportunity to play with different materials in different activity areas, and to alternate busy and quiet activities. On rainy and wintry days, activities may take place inside the building (like in the hallway and group areas). These activities include fun exercises, like obstacle courses, *kinderYOGA*, music & movement, and dance. Outside spaces offer children the perfect opportunity to develop their gross motor skills. Children are challenged to run, ride a bike and explore nature (leaves, insects, sun, wind and rain). Children can

fully enjoy themselves during all these activities and in all the different spaces. We make sure children can discover and explore these spaces in a safe way by being alert to dangers and broken equipment. Every year we assess the risks and draw up a plan on how to minimize or eliminate these risks.

### Taking part in a group

Childcare nowadays goes beyond merely giving care; it offers an environment in which educational and social relationships play a key role. Participating in a group involves many important aspects, such as playing and sharing together, building friendships, creating a safe and secure atmosphere, as well as showing respect for each other, each other's possessions and the environment. Developing social competency and sharing values and norms play central role. Participating in a group also means respecting the group's interests as well as individual interests. At The Clown Club, every child has the right to individual care and attention, while taking the interests of the entire group into account. An individual should not suffer as a result of the group's actions. Neither should a group suffer as the result of an individual's actions.

We believe that a child learns best through play. In chapter 5 we describe how play is involved in the different development areas.

## **5. Educational Method**

### **5.1 Different development areas and creating development opportunities**

During the first four years of their lives children develop from a helpless baby into a toddler and then into a preschooler ready to go to school. Healthy development allows them to venture into the world with the self-confidence and skills to conduct themselves in a socially acceptable manner. The early years represent a crucial period for a child's development in many different areas.

All children develop at their own individual tempo, faster in some areas and slower in others. All of them have tremendous potential waiting to be unlocked. The environment in which a child grows and the people who surround the child play an important role in how and at what speed they develop. The childcare center has an important contribution to make in this respect.

Raising awareness of problems in development is an important task of the childcare center. The Clown Club focuses on letting children spend the day in a safe and pleasant environment. This allows us to continuously connect the developmental phases of a child in a group as well as the child as an individual.

Child development can be divided into the following areas:

1. Physical development
2. Social-emotional development
3. Cognitive development
4. Creative development
5. Personal competence (identity and self-reliance)



## 5.2 Physical development

During the years from birth to four, children take big steps in the development of their motor skills. Gross motor skills refer to the ability to move and coordinate the body, arms and legs together.

Babies begin developing these skills by rolling from their backs to their tummies and back again, commando crawling, crawling, sitting and lastly by pulling up to stand. This gross motor development for this age group is also stimulated by laying on blankets, and by playing in front of mirrors and/or in a playpen. We try to encourage the children to move by placing challenging toys near them. This helps to stimulate the baby to move towards the toy. The babies are also encouraged verbally by the teachers. The baby room is designed so the child can always see and/or hear the teachers. The teachers regularly lay or sit on the floor while playing with the children.

Gross motor skills are stimulated for toddlers and preschoolers through activities such as music and dance, *kinderYOGA* and active games. At The Clown Club, children are offered challenging games, materials and activities. A child needs to be able to climb, slide and jump, learning to recognize their own abilities and limitations and deal with different heights and dangers. For this purpose, we have – both inside and outside – equipment like a slide, tables, chairs and activities focused on movement (like parachute games, ball play, walking in sacks and more).

The teachers always play with the children outside. For some children, going down the slide can be scary. With a bit of support and guidance from a teacher, the children are stimulated to try and are quickly playing on the slide by themselves.

Fine motor skills refer to the small movements that require hand–eye coordination. A baby will reach for and grab an object. A toddler may stack blocks. Fine motor skills are also developed through physical contact with the teachers and by playing. For babies, fine motor skills are stimulated through rattles, activity gyms and playing games, such as grasping fingers and pointing to nose. For toddlers and preschoolers, bigger crayons, beads, buttons and puzzles all stimulate fine-motor development.

## 5.3 Social-emotional development

An important aspect of social development is the relationship children have with their environment. All children need security and support from this environment. They want to belong somewhere and experience how it feels to do things together with other children and adults. By associating with children of the same age and with teachers, children learn the effects of their behavior on other people. This gives them greater insight into their own feelings and helps them learn how to deal with reactions that may be different from the reactions they would normally expect from their peers. Children also learn at an early stage how to share, comfort, help and consider others, as well as how to deal with conflicts. Through the presence and support of the teachers, they learn to trust their environment and feel free to explore and play.

An example of this is saying goodbye to dad and mom at the beginning of the day. Some children have a difficult time separating and therefore become sad. The teachers are always ready to give big hugs. Other children may be perfectly fine giving a hug to their parents and running off to play. A lot of young children like to stand at a window and wave goodbye to their parents. The teachers do this together with them and then explain that their parents are going to work. Teachers can talk with the children about what is planned for the day. As soon as the children see that their parents are gone, they usually start playing. Waving goodbye with other children also seems to help a lot. The children help each other in this way.

It is very important that all children feel safe with their teachers. Children react to both the positive and negative noises of the other children. If, for example, another child is happily playing and babbling away, it is clear that the child feels safe and at ease. The teachers happily join in the babbling. Crying children are also joined by their fellow group mates. Once they are accustomed to the noise, this stops. The noises at home are different to the noises in the creche. The bond that teachers make with children is very important. A child who snuggles up into a teacher's neck feels safe, secure and at ease.

Secure attachments at a young age provide the basis for a healthy start in life. Teachers contribute to this by building strong relationships with the children and also by building a relationship of trust with the parents. To support this, The Clown Club aims for staff continuity in each group. Babies and Toddlers have two- to three fixed teachers or faces which they see during the day. Preschoolers may see two- to four different teachers each day, depending on the children's schedules. Besides giving attention to the group and the group's processes, our teachers make time and space for individual attention. This is especially the case in special situations, such as adjustment days when starting or transitioning to a new group and when preparing to leave the childcare center, or during family changes like a new baby or a visitor.

A secure and familiar environment is essential to the development of a child's inner being. Emotional contact like empathizing with each other, imitating each other, laughing and hugging are very important. Young children have their own way of expressing themselves.

It is important to observe their feelings and take them seriously. Changing diapers and feeding are perfect moments for the teachers to give babies and toddlers individual attention.

Listening to stories, doing artwork together and playing together are moments when the older children receive more individual attention. There is also time for this during eating times. The teacher sits with the children at the table and asks the children what they would like to eat. They are encouraged to talk about the day and what all they have done. Each child gets the chance to tell their story. Frequently during open play periods, the teachers will sit on the floor with the children to play with them, rough house, and for hugs. This is another way to strengthen social-emotional bonds.

The teachers try to help the children put feelings like happiness, anger, sadness, fear and indifference into words. In this way children learn to deal with their own

feelings, recognize the feelings of other children and learn how to cope with these feelings.

Sometimes it is necessary for teachers to prohibit certain behavior, but they must accept the feelings of the child and at the same time make the limitations clear to them. Some behavior, such as physical and verbal aggression, is not allowed by the teachers.

The emotional development of babies and young children is stimulated by playing with toys like stuffed animals, puppets and hand games. How the teachers respond to the children, with sounds and movement, is very important during these games. The teachers stimulate the emotional development of toddlers and preschoolers by playing more advanced games, including imaginary and role play. The Clown Club provides materials such as dolls, toy farms, Lego/Duplo and dressing up clothes for this purpose. There is also a play kitchen present in the group and the children can use it to act out situations from home with other children. "Mommy and baby" is quite often played during these moments.

When there is a change in a child's behavior, the teachers take changes in the home situation into account, for example the birth of a baby brother or sister, moving to a new house or other circumstances. Young children express many of their feelings through play. Teachers can respond to these situations by playing games with the children. It is important that parents keep the teachers well informed of any changes at home.

## **5.4 Cognitive development**

### Language

Young children develop at a very fast pace, and language development is an important part of this. This starts already with babies. They begin with babbling and it is very important that the teachers respond to this communication. At our bilingual childcare center, where both Dutch and English are used, there is an even greater emphasis on language.

It is important to guide children in their language development as well as to listen to them. The Clown Club has a Code of Conduct describing how these two languages should be used within the center.

Cognitive development refers to the development of language (understanding and speech) and thinking. Understanding and insight are gained by organizing, remembering, using and combining the information received from their surroundings and from new situations. Language and thinking are very closely related. Learning two or more languages can be very useful and stimulating for young children. It is important that this happens during the 'sensitive period' of the language acquisition process (between birth and 10 years). The development of a multilingual child is largely the same as the language development of a monolingual child. The difference is in the design of the two systems for each language. It is quite normal for multilingual children to have a more limited vocabulary initially as they have to attach two labels to every new word they learn.

In order for children to make progress in their multilingual language acquisition, it is important that they are encouraged to distinguish the languages from each other. At The Clown Club, we do this through the consistent use of one language; in the

English-speaking groups only English is spoken and in the Dutch-speaking groups only Dutch. In this way, the use of more languages is linked to specific rooms, activities, people and situations. For example, a child speaks only Spanish at home and only English or Dutch at The Clown Club.

Research shows that children can handle the acquisition of two or more languages very well. For this it is important that the children are spoken to in both languages in a varied way and often. The teachers at The Clown Club take an active role in this by talking a lot with the children. Wherever possible the teachers respond to a child's every language expression, from the first sound a baby makes to the questions and stories of a preschool child. To stimulate language development the teachers, organize different activities such as singing, verbal games and games with sounds.

### Thinking

The development of thinking includes the ability to reason and solve problems. This is a complex information-processing process that can be overwhelming for children. Teachers try to structure this information processing through play. For a child playing is learning. A child learns through examples and imitation as well as through experimentation with different kinds of objects and materials. A child's world is organized through all kinds of different games, activities and discussions of everyday occurrences. The teachers explain and name things and encourage the children to express themselves. As part of a child's cognitive development, language development has a significant impact on thinking. Talking is a way of thinking aloud. Young children still think very concretely, and the teachers adjust their communication to accommodate for this. They also pay extra attention to this aspect during circle time.

Through thinking, children are able to find solutions to problems by themselves, and the teachers encourage them to do so as much as possible. Children who have an issue with each other are given the opportunity to resolve it themselves. This appeals to their thinking capacity and makes it easier for them to handle different situations. It also encourages their creativity in problem solving.

To encourage cognitive development, The Clown Club provides a rich variety of materials and opportunities that encourage the children to learn new skills and make new connections each and every day as they learn through play.

### **5.5 Creative development**

Teachers stimulate creative development by offering different types of materials (water, sand, paint, play-dough, dressing-up clothes and face paints) and activities (story time, music and dance) to the children. Babies are stimulated toward creative development when they get to feel water and paint, feathers, new sponges and dish brushes with their teachers and by enjoying rhythmic baby music, classical music and sounds from nature.

Toddlers and preschoolers use these creative- and imaginative toys and messy play materials in more of an explorative way. They learn what the possibilities and properties are, and the results and function of the materials are not important. Children can be creative in many different ways, such as through storytelling and fantasy role play. It is important for children to be acknowledged for this and to be

given space for their own ideas. Artwork is an example of allowing children to create independently without expectation or judgment. We aim to encourage curiosity and a love for learning and for creative expression. We want children to celebrate themselves.

### **5.6 Personal competence (identity and self-reliance)**

Gradually, children become aware that they are individuals and are different from everyone else. For example, they recognize themselves in a mirror and begin to point to things they want. They also become increasingly aware of the influence they can have on their environment. Their self-will becomes stronger during the toddler and preschool stages, and they become more sensitive to approval and disapproval. Everyone wants to be loved and accepted and appreciated.

It is important to adopt a positive attitude when interacting with the children, encouraging them as much as possible to behave as desired by giving them many compliments during the day. This is the case not only when they have done something 'correctly' or well, but also when they dare to *try* something (for example a new food or a new skill) and put effort into a task or a game. When children receive compliments and positive remarks about their behavior, it has a positive effect on their self-image. In this way, they learn what behavior is encouraged and what behavior is discouraged. Compliments boost their self-confidence and feeling of competence.

The teachers respect that all children are different and unique in their preferred activities, pace and level of spontaneity. Teachers help make the children aware of their identity by calling them by their first and last names on a regular basis and by giving them their own space and belongings.

Teachers may stimulate a child's individual interests and competencies within the boundaries of the group and the organization.

One of our guiding principles is enabling children to grow into independent people. Independence, agency, and self-reliance are important values in our society. Teachers encourage children to try things by themselves, while ensuring that they do not become too frustrated if they do not succeed. By giving the children tasks, such as putting toys away after playing with them, the teachers help them develop a good sense of self-reliance. Tasks are always kept clear and simple. Asking too much of a child can actually hinder their personal growth. Children are encouraged, invited and guided rather than left to fend for themselves, which can have an adverse effect on their independence.

Behavior is largely learned and can therefore be influenced. Other factors, such as a child's temperament, also play a key role. This means that certain behavior can be intensified or weakened and that the environment has to react to the child in an appropriate way. All children need attention and seek approval. If a child does not receive enough positive attention and approval, they may seek attention through negative, disruptive behavior. If a child exhibits behavior that does not fit into the group, they will be taught why this is not acceptable. Teachers explain how they would like the child to behave to get along with the group. Teachers always talk to the child about their conduct and not about them as a person, taking care to be clear

and consistent at all times. Children are rewarded by giving positive confirmation of their performance, approval. Correction (guide and model desired behavior) and confirmation (approval) are used to encourage desired behaviors and to teach boundaries. This provides children with compassionate feedback on their functioning within the group, and it offers new skills to expand their abilities and independence.

### **5.7 Mentors and exceptional behavior**

Each child is assigned a mentor. Their mentor is the teacher with whom the parents can discuss their child's development and wellbeing. Mentors insure that the child's standard observation chart is completed correctly, and they report to parents on Parent Evenings. To be able to follow a child's development, a mentor needs to really know the child well. Therefore, a mentor is one of the teachers from the child's group who has a similar schedule and can spend time with the child, encouraging their appropriate care and development. Parents are informed as to which group teacher is their child's mentor when the children enter a new group.

The mentor also fills the roll as a contact point, with the permission of parents and under the supervision of management, in the event that any educational, childcare or healthcare professionals outside the organization may be consulted.

If there is advancement, delay or any unusual behavior in a child's development, we conduct additional observations. We discuss any concerns we may have with the parents and try to find a solution together. In certain cases, we may advise parents to seek the help of an external expert, such as a speech therapist or a physiotherapist. Though we are pleased to cooperate with and support any outside therapists, follow-up is the responsibility of the parents.

Extra care and support are provided according to an official plan: goals, guidance activities and evaluation are recorded. Parents are actively involved in this process. The effects of the extra care and guidance are evaluated by the use of the observation chart in order to evaluate if the goals are achieved. The plan is adjusted according the evaluation.

In cases where external care is provided, the teachers will adjust as much as possible to the given external care. When possible there will be contact between the external care organizations (think of cooperation with physiotherapist) and the teachers.

In some cases, we work together with the external *Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin*<sup>2</sup> (CJG, or the Center for Youth and Family) and the *Schooladviesdienst Wassenaar*<sup>3</sup> (SAD, or School advice service) with the parents' permission. Occasionally we will discuss a child anonymously, if we believe external help is necessary, but we do not have the parents' consent. Parents can, of course, ask us for information about the care and advice team at any time.

When children move from The Clown Club to a Dutch primary school, we forward the observation charts to the school. We do not pass these on to schools in other countries however, as this is part of a child observation system that applies to Dutch

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<sup>2</sup> *Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin*: Centre for Children and Families

<sup>3</sup> *Schooladviesdienst Wassenaar*: Wassenaar Schools Advisory Service

child caregivers, nurseries and primary schools in Wassenaar. We will not send the charts on without the parents' consent. The observation charts are discussed during a final talk with parents before the child goes to school.

### **5.8 Protocol for suspicions of child abuse and domestic violence**

The Clown Club has a set protocol that we follow if we suspect child abuse or domestic violence. This includes a definition of child abuse in accordance with the *Wet op de Jeugdzorg*,<sup>4</sup> follow-up action, the responsibilities within The Clown Club, information about the signs and practical information concerning the *Advies- & Meldpunt Kindermishandeling*<sup>5</sup> run by *Bureau Jeugdzorg*.<sup>6</sup>

Each group and the office have a copy of this protocol and it is available for review. The staff are aware of its content, and information on this subject is updated when necessary. We are mandated reporters.

## **6. Social Awareness**

### **6.1 Passing on values and standards**

Values and standards play a permanent role in a child's education. Values give an expression to the meaning people give to certain behavior, objects or events. Ideas or opinions give an indication of how important some things are to people. Values are distinctively culture-bound; they change over time and differ from society to society. Standards translate values into rules and regulations on how adults and children should behave towards each other.

### **6.2 Exchanging values and standards**

Children are molded through their contact with adults and other children. Contact between adults and children in a daycare center is different to the contact they have at home. The teachers are involved with the children in a professional way, maintaining contact with each child in the group as well as the group as a whole. On both levels, there is a constant exchange of values and standards via communication and interaction, making it a continuous process. Each day the rules are repeated in the group verbally and non-verbally and, wherever possible, the children are told why something happens in a certain way, bearing their development stage in mind. Through the use of language, there is a conscious exchange of values and standards between children. Non-verbal exchange also plays a major role in their communication. Teachers deal with this very carefully and act as role models for the children when it comes to sharing values and standards.

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<sup>4</sup> *Wet op de Jeugdzorg*: Youth Care Act

<sup>5</sup> *Advies- & Meldpunt Kindermishandeling*: Advice and Reporting Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect

<sup>6</sup> *Bureau Jeugdzorg*: Youth Care Office

### **6.3 Dealing with Prejudices**

The teachers try to be aware of their own prejudices and those of others with respect to religion, ethnicity, social standards, gender and sexual orientation. They realize that they are influenced by the surroundings in which they were raised, and that there are certain matters that are taken for granted, but that could be called into question. The teachers try to be critical about opinions and behavior arising from these prejudices, including their own. They do all they can to prevent the children from developing prejudices, taking into account that children are curious and approach new subjects with an open mind.

The teachers try to respond whenever they notice children expressing prejudice in their play or conversation. They also provide unconventional toys, read stories and sing songs to show children that there are more choices than the 'common' paths. The teachers are alert in not expressing any negative opinions about certain groups in our society and are aware that they should not be voiced by the children or heard by others. They actively talk about different groups to provide children with more knowledge. This demonstrates to the children that things that are different or strange do not have less value.

### **6.4 Differences**

Children from diverse cultural backgrounds are welcome at The Clown Club. Within each group, we pay attention to the special cultural or religious or national events occurring in the different family cultures represented in the group, and we try to honor them in an appropriate manner. We try to explain the meaning of the event to the children as much as possible. The difference in social backgrounds is mainly reflected in clothing and language.

We have both typical 'boys' and 'girls' toys available at the daycare center. Freedom of choice and a child's own individual nature determine which toys they play with. We encourage boys to play with dolls and be good daddies, and we know girls like to play with cars and trucks and airplanes too. Everyone may dress up in whatever clothes they choose. We are about encouraging, not judging or limiting, children's freedom of expression, as they learn through play.

We believe that children do not need to become somebody, but that they are already somebody. They need to be treated seriously and respectfully. Respect from the teachers stimulates a child's self-confidence and self-esteem and teaches them to have respect for others and the environment.

### **6.5 Problems and conflicts**

Children are encouraged to solve their social problems themselves. Teachers offer help if a child is not succeeding or if a particular child always comes out as a 'winner' or 'loser'. Less able children are given the opportunity to make their needs and wishes known in order to help them succeed. The teachers teach the children to take account of each other by showing them how to reach an agreement through



communication. Children also learn how to use their words to defend themselves at an early stage.

## **6.6 Celebrations and holidays**

At The Clown Club we mark a number of events, like birthdays, leaving and celebrations like Sinterklaas and Halloween. By approaching these occasions in specific ways, the children learn their meaning. By creating habits, children are given security and enjoyment. The daily schedule can also be seen as a set ritual.

The children and teachers at The Clown Club come from many different cultures and have diverse nationalities and religions. Once a year we take a special look at these differences on International Day. This is an informal event where parents and children can share something from their own country, such as traditional clothing, food or other information. Parents also have the opportunity to meet other parents and chat with the teachers, as well as seeing what the children have made in the groups. We ask that everyone be aware of cultural sensitivity and respect for all.

## **6.7 Outings**

During some themes it is a lot of fun to take an outing outside of The Clown Club. For instance, trips to the library or the children's farm. Parents are informed of these outings well in advance. Parents must give written permission for their child to join in. We always ask parents to join in when at all possible for extra supervision. If there is not enough supervision for an outing, it will, unfortunately, be cancelled. We only go on outings with the preschool groups.

## **6.8 Coping with bereavement**

The death of a person in a young child's immediate vicinity is a very radical change. It is very important that the teachers are informed when this happens so that they can respond in an appropriate manner. Comforting, soothing and offering warmth are real ways in which they can help the child deal with their grief and sorrow. It is important to give age-appropriate information to the child. It is also important not to ignore or avoid discussing the event.

# **7. Child safety, care, hygiene and health**

We base our child safety, care, hygiene and health efforts on the 'Gezondheidsrisico's in kindercentrum of peuterspeelzaal (0-4 jaar)'.<sup>7</sup> We also draw on our own health and safety risk assessment. This is available in our office for public inspection. All staff are familiar with its contents and each year it is evaluated by the whole team.

## **7.1 Childcare Provisions Act (*Wet Kinderopvang*)**

The law stipulates that childcare must contribute to the healthy development of a child in a healthy and safe environment. It also demands that The Clown Club carry out its responsibilities in relation to parents, teachers, health and safety, accommodation and facilities, group size and composition, teacher-child ratio, education policy and suggestions and complaints. For years The Clown Club has

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<sup>7</sup> Health risk guidelines for children aged up to 4 years published by the Community Health Services Association.

been putting extra effort into ensuring health and safety. We are inspected by an independent organization: The Health and Safety Inspectorate (*GGD Zuid-Holland West*).

## 7.2 Role of the Health and Safety Inspectorate (GGD)

The GGD monitors our vision on creating a healthy and safe environment, carrying out regular inspections at least once a year. The supervisor (the GGD inspector) assesses our health and safety efforts against a framework for the daycare sector. The inspection report can be reviewed on The Clown Club's website. It is also registered in the *Landelijk Register Kinderopvang* (LRK)<sup>8</sup> and is available in The Clown Club office.

## 7.3 Safety management

Children's curiosity develops rapidly, and they are keen to discover the world around them, often not recognizing the dangers. As they get older, they learn what is allowed, what is not allowed, what is dangerous and what is not. Teachers practice safe behavior with the children, ensuring frequent repetition. Of course, there will always be children who fail to observe an agreement or follow a rule. Because it is impossible for teachers to keep an eye on every child every minute of the day, a safe environment is very important. There is an area of tension between safety and educational aspects, and the aim is to offer sufficient challenges and learning opportunities while maintaining a good level of safety. It is not necessary to cover all the risks, but they should be reduced to an acceptable minimum, and situations that could result in serious injury are completely avoided.

In an environment where children play, not everything is used in the way it may be intended, so we have to make sure that the products we have are safe. However, no matter how safe a product is, inappropriate use could result in an unsafe situation. Safety is particularly dynamic, especially in an environment where children experiment and discover. Our safety risk assessment revolves around children's behavior in relation to their environment.

The risk assessment and evaluation and safety protocol address many different situations, rules, agreements and scenarios, making it difficult to summarize them here. We therefore refer you to the complete risk assessment and evaluation and safety protocol found in the office and in each group. The protocol is also available on our website.

### Four-eyes principle (*vier-ogen-principe*)

The Clown Club puts great effort into many aspects of child safety. Besides physical safety, we pay extra attention to the children's emotional safety (see also section 5.4). All staff members are qualified to work with children in a daycare center, showing respect, caring and competence in their interaction with the children. We also ensure emotional safety through 'social checks', making sure that another person can see and/or hear a member of staff at all times. We do this by:

- fitting windows in each area so that everyone can see in;
- promoting an open culture where adults (teachers, management and parents) can enter an area at any time;

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<sup>8</sup> National childcare register.

- switching on baby monitors for the whole day, even when there are no children in the sleeping rooms.

#### **7.4 Health management**

Opinions on health often differ, but the one thing people usually agree on is that the younger a child is, the more vulnerable they are.

There are numerous factors that affect health, and direct connections are often difficult to demonstrate. Taking care of children in an environment where good health is ensured wherever possible involves more than just preventing childhood diseases. Even when there are no sick children at the daycare center, children can still be exposed to risks. Examples of risks that could undermine good health include poor ventilation, combustion gas and dust particles that could cause bronchial disorders over time. We continually assess and minimize such risks by taking appropriate precautions.

In its health risk assessment, The Clown Club divides health risks into four categories that can have a more or less immediate impact on children's health. They include health risks created through the spread of germs, indoor and outdoor air quality and those associated with medical treatment, or lack thereof.

The Clown Club aims to create a situation in which health risks are recognized and addressed in order to prevent illness. The conduct of children, parents and teachers also plays a central role in the Health Risk Assessment and Health Protocol. Both documents are available for inspection in the office and in each group. The protocol is also available on our website.

#### **7.5 Food Safety**

For detailed information on food preparation and storage, refer to our Food Safety Protocol. This document is located in the 'protocol folder' in every group and in the office.

#### **7.6 Indoor set-up**

It is important that teachers and children are able to observe all parts of their room. Teachers need to be able to see all children as much as possible, and younger children need to be able to have eye contact with the teachers while playing. Preschoolers have more of a desire to play in a separate area from time to time. When organizing the indoor environment, we take the children's needs into account, including their physical and emotional safety. Rooms are made attractive through the use of color and different materials, inviting the children to play.

### **8. Contact with parents**

#### **8.1 Cooperation with parents**

The Clown Club assumes responsibility for part of a child's education and care. It is therefore essential to share information on their development, so that teachers and parents remain up to date. Teacher-parent cooperation enables us to give children the best care possible.

To achieve this there needs to be:

1. trust from both sides; understanding each other's responsibilities, capabilities and limitations;
2. respect from both sides; respect from teachers for the parents' responsibility for their child and respect from parents for the teachers' professional responsibility for the child.

Cooperation between parents and teachers takes various forms:

#### Trial period

Clear agreements are made between parents and teachers to ensure that a child's initial period at The Clown Club runs as smoothly as possible. These include ideas on educational aspects, care and the child's routine and customs. Agreements are also made about saying goodbye. During the trial period, extra attention is expected on both sides as well as to the specific wishes of the parents.

#### Sharing educational ideas

By sharing educational ideas both teachers and parents can adopt a similar approach. If a specific approach is successful at home, it may be useful to adopt this at the daycare center too, or vice versa. Because children find themselves in two different situations, it is important to create as much common ground as possible.

#### Parents' educational queries

The Clown Club can discuss educational ideas with parents through individual contact. The teachers are with the children throughout the day and have good insight into their development. If there are problems with a child, teachers will discuss with the parents what may be best for the child.

## **8.2 Involvement & Communication**

At The Clown Club, we try to involve parents as much as we can in their child's care. Most contact geared towards the child takes place between teachers and parents, bearing parents' wishes in mind wherever possible. If teachers find that parents' wishes may conflict with the interests of the child and/or the daycare center, teachers will first seek to understand the parents' ideas and perspective, and can explore and explain differences in order to gain mutual understanding and find solutions.

There is also contact between individual parents and the office. All parents are welcome to contact Karin or Bryony with questions or concerns, ideas or suggestions. We strive to provide parents complete and timely information on urgent issues such as illnesses within the daycare center, as well as on routine news from the office and from the various groups. Let us know how we can best serve you.

The Clown Club has a parent committee which represents the collective interests of the parents. We attach great importance to improving quality and providing the best possible service. In order to achieve this, it is essential that parents are able to make their wishes and ideas clear to the management. Another way parents can make their views and ideas known is through the parent committee.

## **8.3 Adjustment and saying goodbye**

When a child joins the daycare center, there is an initial period of adjustment for both parents and children as they get used to the fact that they are separated during the day. Adjusting for the children means building up enough trust to be able to function as part of the group. During the first few weeks, the emphasis is on the child, parents

and teachers getting to know and trust each other. Teachers take the initiative in building a trusting relationship with children and parents. However, even when a child starts interacting in the group without feeling afraid or stressed, it does not mean that they are completely settled. A child typically needs around six weeks to lay the foundations for a relationship of trust with the teachers. The teachers are aware of this, even in the case of children who seem to be experiencing a quick and easy adjustment. The time it takes for a child to adjust depends on many different factors, including the professionalism demonstrated by teachers during the early stages of adjustment.

Teachers need to know and experience the:

- child's development phase;
- nature and temperament of the child;
- child's basic trust in primary attachment to people;
- degree of harmony between the situation at home and at The Clown Club.

A child is considered to have adjusted well if:

- they are visibly at ease; they let the teachers comfort and help them and approach the teachers themselves;
- there is non-verbal and/or verbal communication between teachers and the child;
- the child comes to play and eat;
- the child moves freely around the room;
- the child has found its place within the group.
- there are no great differences in their behavior at home and at The Clown Club.

Around two weeks before the placement starts, a teacher will contact the parents to make an appointment, so they can meet the teachers and the group. There will be an intake with the parents and two trial mornings and/or afternoons the week before the placement begins. This will allow the child to become accustomed to a new environment during a week when the parents can be easily reached, and an entire day of childcare is not necessary. The parent will stay for a maximum of 15 minutes and when leaving will do so in a clear manner under the guidance of the teachers. The teachers will give extra care and attention to the child at this time and when the child is being dropped off and picked up.

For the transition to a new group we try to follow a similar procedure. The week before, the child goes on a short visit of around 15 minutes to the new group, accompanied by a teacher from their current group. During the next two days the child spends part of the day with the new group. After no more than 15 minutes the trusted teacher says goodbye to the child and leaves them with the new group. When possible, two or three children go together to the next group so that they have familiar faces around them.

Saying goodbye to a group gives closure to the child. This is an important time for the child as well as the teachers and other children. Traditions like having a goodbye hat, a scrapbook etc. help make goodbyes easier.

#### **8.4 Privacy**

Individual parents are entitled to protection of their privacy through the careful handling of all information provided in confidence.

Parents are informed if a third party unrelated to the child's daily care (school, social worker, etc.) contacts us and/or discusses their child with us. The teachers never share confidential information concerning the children or parents with other children, parents or colleagues.

The Clown Club regularly takes photos of the children for use in brochures, on the website, etc. If you do not want your child to be photographed, please let the office know. During the intake parents will be asked to give or deny permission for their child's photos to be placed on social media.