**Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE)**

The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) programme is a universal two-year pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range.

It provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. The programme is provided for three hours per day, five days per week over 38 weeks per year and the programme year runs from September to June each year.

There is one point of entry at the beginning of the programme year. The programme will be available to all children who have turned 2 years and 8 months of age before August 31st as long they won’t turn 5 years and 6 months of age on or before June 30th of the programme year.

Childcare services taking part in the ECCE programme must provide an appropriate pre-school educational programme which adheres to the principles of Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework for all children from birth to 6 years in Ireland and Síolta, the national quality framework for early years care and education.

**Eligibility for ECCE**

**This table shows the eligibility for ECCE by year of birth. The programme is available to all children from the September after the child has turned 2 years and 8 months.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Birth date between** | **ECCE start date** | **ECCE end date** |
| **1st January 2018 - 31st December 2018** | **1st September 2021 + 1st September 2022** | **June 2023** |
| **1st January 2019 - 31st December 2019** | **1st September 2022 + 1st September 2023** | **June 2024** |
| **1st January 2020 - 31st December 2020** | **1st September 2023 + 1st September 2024** | **June 2025** |
| **1st January 2021 - 31st December 2021** | **1st September 2024 + 1st September 2025** | **June 2026** |
| **1st January 2022 - 31st December 2022** | **1st September 2025 + 1st September 2026** | **June 2027** |