

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CARE FOR YOUR CHILD.

Choosing the right care for your child is an important decision. In Dubai, there are many options which suit different requirements and budgets. However, with no OFSTED or other central body providing parents information many families are unclear about what the offerings are or should be. By asking yourself and the staff at your nursery choices the questions below – you can ascertain where your needs are best met. The Ministry of Social Affairs regulates nursery licenses and there are various checks done at sites, but standards do vary widely. At Blossom, we aspire to be a secure and stimulating place especially catering to the needs of working parents and have designed our site and processes with these in mind. This “ASK A MILLION QUESTIONS” is designed for you to be aware of various issues that may affect your choice of nursery....

THE BASICS:

1. When can I visit? Are there spaces?
2. Where is the Location and is there Parking?
3. What are the Nursery Hours?
4. If there is afternoon care, how is it staffed? How many children stay in the afternoons? what do children do? Is there a program of activities? Can I see it?
5. Is it flexible – can I drop off late / pick up early?
6. Are there Suitable Programs for parents who need care all year round? When are you closed during the year?
7. How much does it cost? When do I pay?
8. Is there a trial period? Settling period?
9. How much notice must I give for withdrawal? What is the refund policy?
10. What is your late policy ? Can you extend pick up in emergency's? Add one off days?
11. Do you offer Transport? If so, who drives? What coverage is there?

STAFF / TEACHING / LEARNING:

12. What are the staff to student ratios overall at the centre? In particular classes? Age groups?
13. How are children allocated to a class? What is the age range in that class?
14. Do children change classes or remain in the same group for a year?
15. Where are staff from? Can you speak to them?
16. What is the primary language of instruction?
17. Do you have specialist music, language and other staff?
18. How do you staff for illness/holidays?
19. Are the majority of staff on your visa? What is staff turnover like?
20. Does the centre use a variety of teaching methodologies? If yes – which ones?
21. How is teaching and learning done at this centre?

22. What is the curriculum offered? If British Foundation Curriculum – ask if they fill out the learning record for each child? If not – why not? How are the six areas of learning – literacy, numeracy, creativity, personal, social and emotional development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world used?
23. How is lesson planning done? Can you see a lesson plan?
24. What is a typical day at nursery like?
25. Do you provide daily reports?
26. Do you provide term reports? Assessments? Report Cards?
27. Are there parent afternoons or opportunities to interact with staff?
28. How strong is the parent / teacher link? Are parents active in the nursery?
29. Are there concerts, character days, seminars and discussions between parents and the centre?
30. Is there a portfolio book or folder for each child? How is information communicated to parents?
31. Is there a policy on children doing their own work? (if a child is bringing home a “perfect” painting / writing – they probably got too much “help”)
32. Are staff trained and qualified in the curriculum? Where were they trained?
33. Do you provide continuous staff training? How? Which providers have you used?
34. Do staff have children of nursery age? Do they go to the nursery?
35. Where do children go to “big school”?
36. Are you an inclusive nursery or do some “passports” / companies get preference?
37. Do you have any children with special needs? If not, do you take them at all?
38. Are children with different learning styles catered for? For example – do you approach learning from a variety of ways catering to visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners?
39. Do you cater for gifted and high ability children?
40. Where do children spend their time? Are they in a classroom all day?
41. Are there lots of common areas or differentiated spaces children can visit?
42. How many books does your centre have? Do you have storytime / reading every day?
43. Do you use worksheets?
44. Do you use a phonics program ? Which one? Are staff trained in it?
45. What special activities do you offer?
46. Do you have special visitors like dentists? Firemen?
47. Do you have trips to places off site?
48. Where do you buy resources from? How are they allocated?
49. Do you look for European safety standards and monitor toy recalls?
50. Do you have a toy policy? For example are guns, swords etc prohibited?
51. Is there a TV, if so – how is it used? How long and what can be watched?
52. Do children have access to computers? How many are there and what do they do on them?
53. Can children access the internet? If yes, are their controls?
54. What is your discipline policy?
55. What is your biting/fighting policy?
56. Do you see staff talking to children at eye level? Using positive praise? Smiling?

57. Where do children nap? Do they sleep on Mats? Beds? Cots? Are there enough for each child?
58. Do staff know the childrens names?
59. Can you speak to the staff? Even nannies and cleaners? Or do they ask you to talk to the “teachers” only?

OPENNESS/ SAFETY / FEATURES:

60. Is there an open door policy for parents?
61. Can I call to check up on my child during the day?
62. Does the site / classrooms have CCTV?
63. How is site access controlled? Cameras? Keycards? Scanners? How are lost keycards dealt with?
64. Who can pick up my child and how is this controlled?
65. Are staff paediatric first aid trained? Can I see their certificates?
66. Do you have fire evacuation plan? Have you done a fire drill?
67. Are their working smoke detectors in each room? Fire alarms? Extinguishers? Do you have a contract with a company to maintain them?
68. Are cords and power points sealed and stored properly?
69. What temperature is the air conditioners on?
70. How often are the air conditioners cleaned and serviced?
71. Do you use air purifiers/ aromatherapy?
72. Is there wheelchair access? / buggy access?
73. Do you include Food ? If yes, is it Fresh? Nutritious? Copy of Menu?
74. If children bring food from home – are their restrictions on Sweets? Nuts? Do children share?
75. Where do children eat?
76. Do you maintain an allergy list? Are there prohibited foods at the nursery?
77. Where are children changed? Where are nappies and other bits stored? How often are they changed? Is there set check times?
78. Do you do potty training? If so, how? Are there enough toilets? Are they child sized? Can I see them? (Is there toilet paper available? paper towels? How hygienic doe it look?)
79. How often are toilets / bathrooms /classrooms cleaned per day? Is there a schedule?
80. How are toys and resources cleaned / sterilized? How often? Do you have a cleaning rota? Can I see it?
81. What cleaning chemicals are used?
82. Do you have a illness and exclusion policy?
83. What is the policy regarding a sick child at nursery? When can they come back? Do they need a doctors note?
84. Do you alert parents to cases of lice? Chicken pox and other infectious type issues? If so, how?

85. Do you administer any drugs (calpol, cough syrups)? What is the procedure with this and who can administer? Do you maintain a record of this ?
86. Are their stairs? Do they have antislip tracking on them? Are their gates allowing access on top and bottom? Is there a childsize handrail?
87. Is the flooring inside “natural”? Is it antibacterial / antimicrobial? Padded?
88. Are foam mats or carpets used - how often are they cleaned?
89. Is there an outdoor playground? Is it shaded?
90. How much time is spent outside? What outdoor activities are available?
91. Is play equipment on appropriate flooring with padding and “bounce” to cater to fall height regulations? Is there a concrete underlay or just compacted sand?
92. Is external flooring safe to ride bikes on? Fall on ? Crawl on?
93. Is there artificial turf? If so, is there infill (little rubber bits) which is not childsafe?
94. Is there natural grass? If so how is it fertilized?
95. Have all plants on site been checked so they are not poisonous? Do they have thorns or other dangerous aspects?
96. Is there a pool? Is it gated? Shaded? What is the depth of the pool? How often is it used and can even babies use it?

LAST NOTES:

97. Can you spend time watching the interaction – are staff nurturing?
98. Look out for obvious hazards – unattended scissors, hot drinks, open gates etc.
99. Ask to speak to parents there or others who can recommend the service. Most of all – trust your instinct! Nurseries are busy, active places and a true picture will sometimes unfold gradually. Do children seem happy? If yes, then that’s a good sign!