

## Joburg shopping mall opens creche to serve needs of community

The Balfour Mall in Johannesburg has availed some of its retail space and funded the development of an early childhood development centre to cater to the needs of pre-primary school children in the community.



Source: Supplied

The Scatterlings creche opened recently with 44 young children joining the facility. The ECD centre aims to accommodate 70 learners this year, with capacity set to increase in years to come.

Scatterlings is run by a non-profit organisation that started in response to the need to cater to the early development stages of young South African children. Today, over 500 creches use its curriculum and learning programme that understands the importance of mental, emotional and social development. Teacher training includes recognising and identifying learning difficulties and special needs, health and safety, and various forms of assessment.



Source: Supplied

"We are honoured to have had the support of Investec Property Fund to bring to life a quality ECD centre in the Balfour Mall. Investec's team were passionate, professional and committed. The Scatterlings ECD Centre in Balfour Mall would not have been possible without Investec," says Theresa Aaronson, founder and CEO of Scatterlings.

Investec Property Fund noted that while early childhood development is essential to equipping a child to live a fulfilled life, many areas in South Africa are under-served in this regard.

"During the first three years of a child's life, 50% of their intellect is developed, with a further 25% being developed by the age of six years. During these crucial early years, 80% of brain cells form connections in response to external stimulation. It is these connections that contribute to the overall Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of the child. Consequently, parents and/or other caregivers have only six years in which to develop the full potential of children in their care," the company stated.

It added that it is well documented that integrated programmes in early childhood development (ECD) can do much to prevent malnutrition, stunted cognitive development and insufficient preparation for school. Research has shown that these programmes can improve primary and secondary school performance, increase children's prospects for higher productivity and future income, and reduce the probability that they will become burdens on public health and social service budgets.



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## 450m<sup>2</sup> of retail space donated

The almost 450m<sup>2</sup> Scatterlings creche at Balfour Mall has been designed to provide for all of the above and more. The new educate centre includes naturally-lit play areas, rest spaces, learning facilities, educational toys and dedicated bathrooms, all serviced by a team of dedicated teachers and caregivers. Children will be provided with a healthy lunch and refreshments on a daily basis.

“Contributing to improving quality of life in South Africa is at the heart of our retail property business,” said Jenna Sprenger, CFO of Investec Property Fund. “With education being so fundamental to empowering people and shaping society, we are pleased that we could contribute to fulfilling this need with this exciting project,” she added.

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