

VWCA Childcare
Parent Handbook
Nature Preschool
Daycare
Out-of-School Care



Daycare and Nature Preschool Program Information

Little Steps Philosophy

The Little Steps program is child directed and play based. This emphasizes the value of unstructured learning that allows children to make choices, experiment, and use hands on exploration with materials in the preschool and daycare environment. The toys and activities are developmentally appropriate to support your child's emotional, physical, social and cognitive needs. It is our philosophy that children learn best when the information provided to them is easily relatable to their lives, so most of the programming revolves around topics that they can find within their community.

Little Steps strives to provide a safe, welcoming environment for children to learn about their world as well as how to navigate in it. Emphasis on cooperation, and using words to solve conflicts and build self confidence is a large part of the program. We strive to allow children to make their own choices and explore in an environment which is physically safe, cognitively challenging, and emotionally nurturing.

Nature Preschool Philosophy

The Nature Preschool offers a curriculum that supports a deep connection to nature. We focus on creating a framework for children to play and learn in a natural environment. The Nature Preschool focuses on the whole child by promoting physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth. Children will be learning about nature through their direct experience, exploration, and discovery of the world around them. The Nature Preschool is a place where children are free to challenge themselves physically while enjoying the freedom of the outdoors. We will encourage the development of independence and self expression. The majority of the day will be spent outdoor exploring in all weather conditions.

Little Steps Daycare and Nature Preschool Requirements

Your child must be toilet trained and be 3 years old by December 31st.

Registration forms will not be processed until fully complete and deposit is paid. No verbal contracts.

What to bring?

Please label each item of clothing and store in a large zip lock bag in cubby or backpack. If items are not labelled, an educator will label them. If clothing is sent home dirty, it must be replaced the following day.

- Two changes of clothes (top, pants, underwear, and socks), indoor and outdoor shoes.
- Weather Wear: rain coat, muddy buddy/rain pants, rain boots, warm hat and gloves, sun hat, sunscreen (summer), and running shoes. (No open-toed shoes or sandals).
- Food: Lunch and two snack and a water bottle needs to be sent each day. Please label all lunch bags, containers, and water bottles with your child's name. **Please note that all VWCA programs are NUT FREE.**

- Fitted Sheet/Blanket (labelled).
- Optional: small stuffed animal.
- All children are required to participate in a 1-hour rest time. Books/quiet toys will be provided after 30 minutes to any child that does not fall asleep.

Food and Drink

We promote healthy eating and nutritional habits. Safe drinking water is always available for all children, and we encourage them to drink as much as they would like. If a child has specific nutritional requirements, we will ensure that all staff understands these requirements. Please pack a snack and/or lunch from home which follows Canada's Food Guide. Please inform the staff of any dietary needs or allergies.

For Daycare, please pack two snacks and a lunch from home.

For Preschool, please pack a small snack.

****Please note that all VWCA Childcare Programs are NUT FREE.****

- Please do not send candy, gummies, chocolate bars, chips, or pop.

Active Play

We acknowledge the importance of active play in the preschool and the daycare. Gross motor development is just as important as fine motor development. We go outside daily for 60-90 minutes in both of our Early Childhood Programs. When we are outside, we have outdoor equipment that the children can explore, a variety of games, and time to explore natural materials. We will go out in ALL weather conditions to allow children time to get fresh air and have play time. We will be enjoying all seasons outdoors. Please see "What to Bring" to ensure your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor play.

Program Hours

Little Steps Daycare operates Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Nature Preschool operates Monday-Friday from 9:00am-12:00pm.

Please ensure that you arrive by 9:30am.

Little Steps Daycare Daily Schedule:

8am- 9am: Classroom opens with greetings and handwashing

8am – 9:30: Open snack table, play and art

9:30am Tidy up for Circle Time/Morning Activity

10:00am: Washroom Break

10:15am: Dress for outside time

10:30am: Outdoor Play

12:00pm: Lunch time

12:30pm-1:30pm: Rest Time

1:30pm: Washroom Break

1:45pm: Afternoon Snack

2:00pm: Afternoon Play/Art or Dress for Outdoor play

2:30pm – 4:00pm: Afternoon Activity or Outdoor play

4:00pm-5pm: Indoor Activity, children have the option of having another snack, then playtime until they go home.

The times of the schedule are flexible and may be adapted to meet the needs of the children

Nature Preschool Daily Schedule:

The preschool program operates Monday to Friday from 9:00am-12:00pm.

9:00am Preschool opens with greetings and Free Play	Monday:	Garden/Orchard
9:30am – 10:00am Circle Time	Tuesday:	Field Trip/Adventure
10:00am – 11:30am Outdoor Exploration	Wednesday:	Nature Art & Craft
11:30am Washroom Break	Thursday:	Science
11:45am Snack Time	Friday:	Animals
12:00pm End of Day		

Program Information: Out of School Care Program

Victoria West Community Centre & Vic West Elementary School Site

The Victoria West Out of School Program offers a caring and safe place for children to learn, play, and have fun. Children registered in this program will be offered the chance to participate in a variety of structured and unstructured activities, games, arts and crafts, and activity-based learning.

Philosophy

Our program aims at a balanced combination of structured and unstructured program time. Activities are developmentally appropriate to support your child's emotional, physical, social and cognitive needs. It is our philosophy that children learn best when the information provided to them is easily relatable to their lives, so most of the programming revolves around topics that they can find within their community.

VWCA strives to provide a safe, welcoming environment for children to learn about their world as well as how to navigate in it. Emphasis on cooperation, using words to solve conflicts and build self confidence is a large part of the program. We strive to allow children to make their own choices and explore in an environment which is physically safe, cognitively challenging and emotionally nurturing.

Program Registration

Children must be school-aged (5-12 years) and **attend Victoria West Elementary School** to be eligible for enrollment in the program.

Fall registration will commence in March.

Priority will be given to:

- Internal Families
- External Families wanting both morning and after-school care
- All other applicants

What to bring?

- A change of clothes (top, pants, underwear, and socks) in a labeled large zip lock bag when your child starts Out of School Care. We can store the bag of spare clothing in a bin at the Centre/School.
- Food: Breakfast (Before School Care) and Snack (After School Care) and water will be provided during program times. If your child requires additional food, please send it with them to school for the day. **Please note that all VWCA Childcare Programs are Nut-Free.
- Outside Wear: Please ensure children are dressed in weather appropriate clothing, as the Out of School program will be spending time outside and active every day.

Food and Drink

We promote healthy eating and nutritional habits. Safe drinking water is always available for all children and we encourage them to drink as much as they would like. If a child has specific nutritional requirements, we will ensure that all staff understands these requirements. A breakfast will be provided during Before-School Care, and a snack will be provided during After-School Care. Please inform the staff of any dietary needs or allergies.

Active Play

The Out of School program spends time outside every day for a minimum of 40 minutes. When it is raining, snowing or too cold, we will still go outside to give the children a chance to run and get some fresh air, but will come inside for some indoor activities if it gets too cold. Please make sure your child has weather appropriate clothing.

Before School Care@ Victoria West Community Centre

7:00-8:00am: Children Arrive, Craft/Activity freeplay,Breakfast

8:20am: Breakfast ends

8:30-8:45am, Clean Up, Walk to School (drop off)

After School Care @ Vic West Elementary School (Gym) or Victoria West Community Centre

2:45pm: Pick Up at VWES.

2:45-3:30pm: Outdoor Time in designated space

3:30pm: Indoors to designated space. Children drop off backpacks, pinnies, and coats.

3:40pm: Washroom break, Wash hands.

3:45-4:00pm: Snack

4:00-5:00pm: Inside Activity, Programmed Choices

5:00-5:30pm: Clean up from Activity, Children prepare for pick-up. Free Play until pick-up

Fees:

Preschool (5 days/wk)

\$370.00/Month

Daycare(5 days/wk)

\$900.00/Month

Out of School Care

Before School Care \$140.00/Month

After School Care \$315.00/Month

Before and After Care

\$420.00/Month Every year in September, the fees will be adjusted to keep up with the cost of living. Parents will be notified with the amount prior to registration for the following year.

Fees are averaged over the school year, some months may have fewer days, some have more, but the fees do not vary.

Payment Requirements:

Program financials are managed by the Centre Manager. We use email communication and will use the email address you have provided on your child's registration form for all communication. Important information is sent out via email; therefore, please insure that the email provided is accessible at all times, even during holiday breaks. If this is not possible, please provide your preferred method of communication.

- Fees are due on the 1st of the month and are paid via direct withdrawal. Withdrawals will appear on your statement as Victoria West Community Association or VWCA.
- A completed Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) Authorization form must be provided prior to your first day of care.
- For families wishing to have more than one payee, please complete separate PAD forms.
- A VOID cheque must be attached to the PAD agreement. If you are unable to attach a VOID cheque, please ensure that your financial information is entered correctly. Failure to provide correct information will result in a charge of \$15.00.

Here at VWCA we recognize that there are a number of situations that can cause financial strain. If you need to arrange alternate payment arrangements, please contact your onsite Manager.

Withdrawal and cause for discharge

To withdraw or change registered days without penalty, families are required to give one month's written notice on the first of the month to the Onsite Manager to de-register or decrease registered days. In lieu of notice families will be charged one month's fees.

Absentees (when your child will not be attending our program)

If your child will be away due to illness or vacation, please **email** the program manager (Childcare Manager, or OSC Team Lead) with the details. Please note that monthly fees will not be adjusted due to illness or vacation requests.

Affordable Child Care Benefit

As a licensed child care provider, VWCA is eligible to accept provincial childcare benefit for eligible enrolled children. The following are expectation that our program has for families utilizing childcare subsidy:

1. Parents/Guardians are ultimately responsible for all fees as registrants to our program.
2. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for fee payments until benefit plan authorization has been received by our program. Please note that Affordable Child Care Benefit application processing can take 6 to 8 weeks.
3. Parents are responsible for paying any parent portion remaining after the deduction of subsidy from the program fees.
4. Parents are responsible for renewing the benefit authorization before it expires.
5. For more information about this program, please visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-funding/child-care-benefit>

If you require assistance with the application process please contact your childcare manager, or the Child Care Resource and Referral Centre 250-382-7000 or MCFD at 1-888-338-6622, option 1. Please note, authorization from the MCFD (Ministry of Children and Family Development) may take several weeks to process.

Families receiving the Affordable Childcare Benefit must pay the balance of their account by the 1st of the month.

Fees

Fees are **due on the first of the month**, and are payable by cash, cheque, debit or credit (up until August 31, 2020).

As of September, 2020, all fees will be payable by direct deposit.

Upon registration, a \$100 non refundable deposit is due. The deposit will be applied to your first month's fees.

NSF payments will be required to be paid in cash with an additional \$30 NSF charge.

Late Fee Payment Penalty Procedure

If your payment is not received by the 1st of the month, a late fee of \$5.00 per day will be charged. If full payment is not received by the 5th day of the month your child(ren) may not return to the program until the account has been paid in full.

NSF Penalty Procedure

Should your direct debit payment be returned to our organization as NSF, we require repayment. Charges will be applied to your account, unless paying by cash or cheque is requested. Repayment must be in the amount of the original fee as well as a \$15.00 NSF penalty charge. Upon the VWCA receiving notification from our financial institution regarding NSF a notification will be sent to you via email.

Late Pick-Up Fees

If a parent/guardian does not pick up by the time a VWCA program closes, a late fee of \$5 will be charged for the first 5 minutes. After this, an additional \$1 per minute will be charged. The staff will write up an invoice for the amount owing, your copy can be taken to the office and added to your monthly bill. If the fee has not been paid before the end of the week, an additional \$50 fee will be added. If the fee is not paid by the end of the month you will be contacted by the manager to discuss further consequences.

Call if you are running Late!

The following steps will be taken in the event of a late pick up:

- You will be contacted
- If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, your Emergency contacts will be contacted to find someone to come pick up your child.
- If both emergency contacts and parents are unable to be contacted within half an hour of closing, the Ministry of Children and Families will be contacted, and the child will be put into emergency daycare services until a parent is located.

Three late pickups in a row will result in dismissal from the program.

Policies

Behaviour and Guidance Policy

The word “guidance” describes a teaching and learning process by which children develop socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours as they grow to maturity. The goal of guidance is to assist the child in establishing inner control and making decisions. Little Steps Childcare Centre adheres to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health’s “Guidance and Discipline with Young Children” handbook.

Encouraging children to make their own decisions, choices and problem solve is the best solution. Of course, this is a learning process, so an educator will assist the child to resolve the issue themselves.

Conflict Resolution

VWCA believes that a successful program intrinsically relies on the cooperation and cohesiveness of children, their families, staff, the community, and various integral outside resources. Our mission is to create a positive space from a basis of supporting families and community.

In the event of a conflict, the VWCA takes a problem-solving and family-centred approach. We value open communication, mediation, and encourage parents to discuss any concerns regarding their child(ren) and their child(ren)’s experiences in our programs.

Managers have an open door policy and will address a parent’s/guardian’s concerns in a respectful environment. Whenever possible, please email to make an appointment with the onsite manager to assist in discussing the manner in a timely fashion.

In the event that an issue is unresolved between the manager and the parent, please make an appointment with the Executive Director.

Discharge:

The VWCA reserves the right to discharge based on:

- Inability of the child or family to follow VWCA expectations and policies
- Inability of the child or family to adhere to the VWCA Code of Conduct
- Inability of the program to meet the needs of the child or family
- Refusal to meet with management and failure to communicate regarding the care of your child
- Three late payments, non-payments, or NSF cheques
- Three late pickups
- Three non-notified absences

In the event that an issue arises, a mandatory meeting will be set with the onsite manager and Executive Director. All written warnings will go on file. In the case that your child is discharged from the program we will provide a pro-rated reimbursement.

Screens policy

We do not provide any screen time at preschool, daycare, or out of school care.

Drop off/pick up policy

Please adhere to your child's program times for drop-off and pick up.

Daycare (3-5 Yrs) operates from 8:00am-5:00pm. Please drop off before 9:30am. Please arrive for pick up by 4:55pm.

Preschool (3-5 Yrs) operates from 9:00am-12:00pm. Please drop off before 9:30am. Please arrive for pick up by 11:55am.

Before School Care (School-Aged) operates from 7:00-9:00am

After School Care (School-Aged) operates from 2:45pm-5:30pm Please arrive for pick-up by 5:25pm.

Staff schedules are dependent on these times, so if you are running late please let us know ASAP! Our fabulous staff would like to leave when their shift is done.

Please give yourself at least 5 minutes (maybe more when your child first starts the program) prior to closing to pick up your child to make sure that everybody can be out of the room by the time the program ends for the day. If an alternate person will be picking up your child, please have a written note or send an email with the person's full name and phone number as they will be asked for identification.

Authorized Pick-up

Children may only be released to persons named on the child's registration and emergency form. Authorized pick-up contacts must be responsible adults who are of the legal age of 19. Staff will ask for photo ID and a local phone number.

Unauthorized Pick-up

If you wish to have an unauthorized person pick up your child, we require advanced written authorization by completing the unauthorized pick-up section of the registration package or by sending a fax or letter. Pick up contacts must be responsible adults who are of the legal age 19. Staff will ask for photo ID and a local phone number.

Release of Care

Parents must check in with staff so that they can sign your child in and out of program. Your child must be picked by a responsible adult from the authorized pick-up list. Your child may never sign themselves out, walk home or leave the premises without being signed out.

Alleged Impaired Pick-up

The staff must take reasonable steps to prevent any person unable to provide care from gaining access to a child. If a staff member believes the child to be at risk, they will offer to call a taxi, relative, or friend to pick up the person

and child. As required by law, the VWCA staff may call Child Protection Services and/or the police if a child is taken off premises by an allegedly impaired person.

Custody

We require, with registration, all legal documentation regarding custody and custody orders. The VWCA cannot withhold a child from a parent and will not intervene in custody issues unless current court ordered documents have been provided. In the case that we have a copy of a custody order that is not being abided by we will contact all concerned parties. This may include phoning the police and/or The Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Please speak with the manager if you have specific questions relating to your situation.

VWCA Custody Arrangement Document

We require written paperwork indicating the agreement plan outlined by separated or split families. Both parents/guardians are required to fill out the documentation and paperwork to ensure that information is shared.

If you have **joint custody** of your child, we expect payments, pick-up persons, and penalty fees to be provided from the parent who is listed first on the registration form. Split payment information must be provided at the time of registration.

If you have **sole custody** of your child, we expect payments, pick up persons, and penalty fees to be your sole responsibility. In the event that fees are accrued on your day of registered pick up, you are responsible for paying fees before the child can attend on the next registered day. In the event that your child is unable to attend program due to your account being in arrears, we will notify both guardians.

Closures

The **Daycare and Preschool** programs will close for a week at Christmas for Facility maintenance.

We will also close for the following STAT holidays:

New Year's Day	Good Friday	Easter Monday	Victoria Day
Canada Day	BC Day	Labour Day	Thanksgiving Day
Remembrance Day	Christmas Day	Boxing Day	Family Day

In the case of inclement weather, VWCA Programs will mirror the of the Greater Victoria School District (61)for closures.

The **Out of School** program will follow the school calendar for closures. There will be no program on Stat holidays, school Pro-D Days, March Break, Christmas Break, or Summer Break.

Illnesses

Please keep your child at home if they have any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, respiratory symptoms, ear infections, eye infections, diarrhea, fever, lice, vomiting and any other communicable disease like chicken pox.

This prevents the spread of illness in the centre.

During the COVID-19 Crisis, any child attending during our Emergency Agreement will be screened for temperature before drop-off. If a child presents with a temperature they will be asked to self-isolate.

If your child has any of these symptoms, please report them to the Manager by email.

Your child needs to remain at home for at least 48 hours after symptoms (and medications) have stopped.

If your child becomes sick while attending VWCA programs you will be contacted to pick your child up as soon as possible (within 1 hour). If you are not able to pick up, we will contact your Emergency pick up persons listed on your registration form.

Communication

We use e-mail communication and will contact you by e-mail you have provided on your registration form. Important information is sent out via e-mail so please ensure the e-mail address you have provided is accessible at all times, even during holiday breaks. If this is not possible, please provide your preferred method of communication.

We assume that you have received and read our e-mail unless it bounces back as undeliverable. If this occurs we will notify you by phone.

E-mails include: monthly newsletters, billing notifications and relevant program information

It is the parent's responsibility to provide accurate contact information and read the notifications that are emailed out. Notify the childcare manager as soon as possible if your personal contact information changes during the year.

Manager Contact information:

Daycare/Preschool Childcare Manager: Beth Hume email: littlesteps@victoriawest.ca

Phone number: 250-516- 2770 (cell phone)

Please use this number to let staff know that your child is sick/away for the day

Out of School Care Manager: Asha Willis

Email: outofschoolcare@victoriawest.ca

Phone Number: 250-508-0142 (cell phone)

Please use this number to let staff know that your child is sick/away for the day

Daycare/Preschool Cell (Frontline Staff): 250-516-2752

Out of School Care Cell (Frontline Staff): 250-508-5935

VWCA Parent Agreement (Please Sign and Return):

The parent/guardian must initial each box and must sign below acknowledging and taking responsibility for all expectations and policies outlined in the parent/ guardian handbook.

- The policies around fee payments, de-registration and penalty payments
- If the information provided on this form changes, I am responsible for updating it with the manager
- If my child is sick or unable to participate safely I, upon request, will immediately pick-up
- Actively communicate with program staff about your child's needs

By signing below I/we confirm that I/we have read and understand all expectations and guidelines outlined in the parent/guardian handbook

Signature: _____ Date: _____

