

VWCA Little Steps Nature Daycare 2026/27 Parent Handbook



Victoria West Community Association
521 Craigflower Road
Victoria, BC V9A 6Z5

Telephone: 250-590-8922
Fax: 250-590-8921

Website: www.victoriawest.ca
E-mail: childcaremanager@victoriawest.ca

Updated: AUG 2026

Dear Parents,

We would like to extend a warm welcome to all the children and families at Victoria West Community Association. We are committed to providing the best possible learning experience for each child entrusted to our care. To facilitate our licensed daycare programs, we are pleased to offer this parent handbook. The purpose of the handbook is to better acquaint parents with the philosophy, principles, and operations of the Centre. It is hoped that the contents of this handbook will assist you and your child in making your time at Victoria West Community Association a successful, happy, and positive experience.

All parents are expected to be familiar with the Centre guidelines and policies listed within and abide by them.

Sincerely,

Staff of Victoria West Community Association

Victoria West Community Association

Vision:

Victoria West community is a diverse, healthy and vital place to live, work and play.

Mission:

The Victoria West Community Association is a not for profit organization whose mission is to engage residents in community stewardship, to impact decisions that affect the community, to raise awareness, to foster a sense of spirit and pride and to encourage participation in community issues, solutions, projects and events.

Victoria West Community Centre is the heart of the neighborhood, offering diverse and relevant activities for all. It is a place where neighbors meet, learn and volunteer. The Centre provides physical, intellectual, social and cultural services and programs that contribute to individual and community health and development.

Values:

Accountability: We are transparent and accountable to our community, funders and partners.

Inclusiveness: The purposes of the Society are to promote, support or undertake any activity that will enhance the quality of life in the Victoria West community and supports the diverse population of the community.

Sustainability: The social, environmental and economic health and vitality of the community is enhanced by VWCA activities and initiatives.

Service: The VWCA provides services to the community as an advocate for, and facilitate participation in, the discussion of community issues in the provision of community services and in sharing information.

Territory Acknowledgement

With humility and gratitude, we acknowledge that the land on which we gather as guests is the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Lekwungen, also known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt nations.

Little Steps Nature Daycare Philosophy

Our daycare offers a curriculum that supports a deep connection to nature. We interact with nature both as the teacher and the classroom. Our core values include creative play-and inquiry-based learning, often child-led or child-centred activities, diversity and risky play. Our program includes some indoor time but as much as possible will be outside in the beautiful Banfield Park. We will explore the ever-changing natural world throughout all seasons and in all kinds of weather, safety permitting. Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment where children fall in love with the natural. We believe that time spent in nature will bring children confidence, resilience, empathy, health and happiness.

Daycare Program Hours

Typical daily schedule:

8:30am - 9:15 am	Free play activities and snack table open
9:15am - 11:30am	Outdoor Exploration
11:30am - 12:30pm	Transition to Indoors/lunch time
12:30pm - 1:30pm	Rest Time
1:00 pm - 2:00pm	Children that are awake have quiet activity time
1:30pm - 2:00pm	Sleeping children wake up
2:00pm - 2:30pm	Snack and Transition to Outdoors
2:30pm - 4:30pm	Outdoor Exploration
4:30pm - 4:55pm	Transition to Indoors, Quiet Activities and End of Day

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

Parents are welcome into the cubbie/entrance area of the classroom. We ask that you stay with your child until they have been signed in by the educator. All children should wash their hands before entering into the play area. Snack is a choice in the morning but please be aware that the snack table closes at 8:50am. If you arrive after this time, please ensure that your child has already eaten. Also, if you arrive after this time, please ensure that your child is already dressed appropriately for the weather of that day and ready for outside. If the group has already transitioned to outdoor exploration, a sign outside the classroom will tell you where to find them. Please be sure to grab a pinny from the classroom before you go out to meet them. We kindly request that you return to pick up your child no later than 4:55. We do not have options for late pickup.

Yearly Schedule

Little Steps Nature Daycare operates Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm. The programs run continuously year-round. We will close each year for a 2-week Winter Break and a 1-week Spring Break (according to the School District #61 School Calendar) for facility maintenance.

We will also close for the following STAT holidays:

New Year's Day	Family Day	Good Friday	Easter Monday
Victoria Day	Canada Day	BC Day	Labour Day
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	Thanksgiving Day	Remembrance Day	Christmas Day & Boxing Day

Please note, no discounts or refunds are issued for missed days, statutory holidays, sick days, vacations or closures due to inclement weather.

Inclement Weather

In the event of extraordinary inclement weather conditions such as snow, whether unanticipated or where prior knowledge of such conditions are received through meteorological announcements, programs at the Centre may be cancelled. If closures happen prior to programs starting for the days, VWCA Programs will mirror the of the Greater Victoria School District #61. Please check their website www.sd61.bc.ca in the morning for updates. Families will **not be contacted** directly.

If we need to close our programs early due to inclement weather conditions, the Centre will make every effort to inform parents as early as possible through email or text. Parents are asked to ensure that they have a reliable backup plan should an emergency prevent them from picking up their child on time. Please note, no discounts or refunds are issued for missed days, statutory holidays, sick days, vacations or closures due to inclement weather.

Monthly Meetings - Early Closure Policy

To support ongoing staff development and program improvement, Little Steps Nature Daycare, closes early **one day each month** to allow time for staff meetings, training, and planning. This early closure is essential to maintaining the quality of care and education we provide. These sessions allow our team to collaborate, stay current with best practices, and continuously improve our program, benefiting both children and families. Our daycare programs will close at **4 PM** on the **last scheduled Friday of each month**. Please arrive that day by 3:55 at the latest.

Punctuality and Ratios

We strongly encourage parents/caregivers to ensure that their child arrives on time each day (before the first transition of the day). A student arriving late for their program may be both disruptive and distracting to the ongoing learning process. Consistently late arrivals may miss out on valuable topics, activities and materials being introduced.

- Daycare operates from 8:00am-5:00pm.
- Please drop off by 9:00am
- Latest pick of the day is 4:55pm.

In order to operate a full 9 hour/day program, there will be 1 staff for the beginning and end of each day. Maintaining the same schedule for arrival and pickup will allow us to schedule staff accordingly to ensure the required ratio of 1:8 (educator:child) is always maintained. Please plan to have your child attending not more than 8.5 hours each day. If necessary, families may be assigned a specific group schedule as outline below.

Group A – 8:00-4:30 / Group B – 8:30-5:00

Staff schedules are dependent on these times, so if you are running late, please let us know! 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. We do not offer a late pickup option.

Applications and Enrollment

Our daycare program is for children ages 3 to 5. Your child must be fully toilet competent to enroll. This includes using the toilet unassisted and without prompting (before going outside and during bathroom visits). At our discretion, our Little Steps Nature Daycare may accept up to 2 children at a time who are between 30 months of age to 3 years old who are developmentally ready to be included in a 3-5 group.

Since many children leave each September to start Kindergarten, our largest intake is for the fall. Families with children currently enrolled in our childcare programs (Daycare & the OSC Kids Club) as well as their siblings, will

have priority for the September intake. Current families will have the first two weeks of February to submit their applications.

If there are spaces remaining, they will then open for new families to apply starting in March. Throughout the remainder of the year, applications will be accepted when spaces become available. We do not keep a waitlist.

Application forms are available online through our website and must be filled out completely. In addition, after reading the parent handbook, a Parent Agreement must be signed by all parents/guardians. A daycare tour for Parents/Guardians and your child(ren) will then be scheduled by the manager.

Registration is not confirmed until the application is accepted by both parties, you have received a Confirmation of Enrollment email, and the non-refundable administration fee and deposit is received.

Inclusive Programming and Support Needs

We are committed to creating an inclusive, welcoming program for all the children entrusted to our care. We endeavor to support a wide range of abilities, learning styles, and needs within the resources and staffing available to us.

To do this responsibly, it is *essential that families disclose any additional support needs*, diagnoses, or accommodations their child may require at the time of application. This information allows us to assess whether we can meet those needs safely and effectively while continuing to support the rest of the group.

Child's Emergency Information

Educators always carry with them emergency information for each child. Each child has their own page in an emergency binder including:

- child's name and birthdate
- a current portrait photo that can be shown to First Responders
- parent contact information including address and phone numbers
- emergency contacts and authorized pick ups
- medical information such as allergies, medications, doctor and BC Services number

Please notify us as soon as possible if there are any changes to this information, including if you move to a new address or change your contact information so that we always have the most up-to-date information in the event of an emergency. Please also ensure that the contact information for your emergency contacts remains accurate.

Medical Information

It is important for the Centre to have all relevant medical information at hand to ensure the safety of your children including:

- Full Disclosure: Parents must fully disclose all medical information about the child during registration (information as specified in the medical section of the application and/or registration form). Disclosure is vital so that the Centre can take any medical precautions as becomes necessary – such as requiring an EpiPen be kept in the program areas for a child with a severe nut allergy.
- Up-to-Date Information: Should a child undergo a medical procedure or treatment after registration, parents are required to inform the Centre so that changes to medical information can be amended and a medical plan implemented if deemed necessary.
- Immunization: Up-to-date immunization records are required for all newly enrolling children.
- If a child's caregivers have chosen not to have their child vaccinated:
 - a) The Centre will provide the family with [this guide](#) from the public health unit that explains the benefits of immunization and [risks of not vaccinating](#)

b) The family is advised that in the event of an outbreak, or an immediate threat of an outbreak, the child will need to temporarily stay home from their program to protect their child from becoming ill and prevent the spread of the disease

- **Student Medication:** Staff should be notified of any prescription or non-prescription medication a child is taking. In the case where staff may be required to administer medication, please complete a "Permission to Administer Medication" form found on our website. For prescription medication, please bring the container with the pharmacy label. It must have the child's name, dose, and not be expired. For nonprescription medication, please have your doctor fill out the form indicating dose and schedule.
- **Allergies:** Parents must notify the Centre of any allergies and if/when any new allergies or physical condition arise. Emergency medications such as an EpiPen or puffer must be kept on premises for those children prescribed to them for **severe and life-threatening allergies**. These are labelled and kept safely out of reach of other children in the program areas, but easily accessible to staff should they need to be administered. Parents are responsible for ensuring such medications are up to date.

Custody Issues

Should there be custody issues the Centre must have legal papers of *visitation schedules* and any other relevant legal documents, including *restraining orders*, etc. If there are no legal papers, the office will accept a written agreement signed by both parents. **Each parent has a right to receive Centre mail, speak to staff, see attendance sheets, and leave with their child on their appropriate day and time.** Only the parent with legal custody may enroll the child, withdraw the child, or sign permission slips and paperwork.

It is staff policy not to side with either parent in the event of a divorce. Staff also may not write letters in your defense for any legal hearing or legal action. Trust that our staff is here to aid your child and give him/her the best care possible in a consistent and nurturing environment. If the occasion happens when both parents are in the Centre grounds during a time when the two parents are estranged, we expect both parents to treat each other with respect. No conflicts will be tolerated while on Centre property.

Little Steps Nature Daycare Fees (Sept 2026-Aug 2027):

	Monthly Rate	CCFRI Funding	After CCFRI
5 days/week	\$ 1172	\$ 545	\$ 627
Mon, Wed, Fri	\$ 703.20	\$ 327	\$ 376.20
Tues, Thurs	\$ 468.80	\$ 218	\$ 250.80

The BC Childcare Fee Reduction amount is approximate and may vary. Parents are responsible for paying any parent portion remaining after the reduction. You can get more information about the Childcare Fee Reduction Initiative at this link: [CCFRI Estimator website](#).

Please note that each year in September childcare fees may be adjusted to keep up with the cost of living following government guidelines. Parents will be notified with the amount at least a full month prior to the increase.

Fees are averaged over the year, some months may have fewer days, some have more, but the fees do not vary. Fees are **due on the first business day of the month**, payable by direct withdrawal.

Non-Refundable Admin Fee and Deposit

Upon confirmation of your child's registration in daycare, a non-refundable \$125 deposit will then be due in order to secure the space. Once your child starts in the program, \$25 will be retained for the administration fee and the \$100 deposit will be applied to your first month's fees.

Should you choose to not proceed with the registration after it has been confirmed but prior to starting the

program, you must do so with at least a full calendar month's notice (or a month's fees in lieu of notice). The \$125 admin fee/deposit is non-refundable.

Payment Requirements:

Program financials are managed by the Childcare Manager.

- 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 a full calendar month before your first day of care.
- 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.
- For families wishing to have more than one payee, please complete separate PAD forms with void cheques for each and let us know how you will split it (50/50, 60/40 etc).

NSF Penalty Procedure

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 the Childcare Manager at least 3 business days before the end of the month to avoid any penalty or late fee.

Should your direct debit payment be returned to our organization as NSF, we will attempt to withdraw fees a second time (up to 20 days from original payment date). An additional fee of \$30 may be applied if funds are unavailable at the time of withdrawal. VWCA will not be responsible for any costs charged by your bank/ financial institution.

Continued Enrollment for the Next Term

Each year in January or February, our current daycare families will receive a questionnaire regarding their intentions for the next term (Sept-Aug). This information allows us to be able to anticipate the number of spots available for new enrollment in September. An additional admin fee/deposit is *not required* for families who maintain continuous daycare enrollment.

For those wishing to apply for enrollment in the OSC Kids Club Before and After School program at Victoria West Elementary School, our current families can apply in February. Once your enrollment is confirmed, an *annual* non-refundable admin fee/deposit will be required to hold your spot for September. Please note that the OSC Kids Club is for VWES students only. Please see the OSC Kids Club parent handbook for more information specific to that program.

Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB)

As a licensed childcare 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. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for fee payments until benefit plan authorization has been received by our program, and we are able to make the claim on your behalf.
2. We make the subsidy claim around the 15th of each month. If there is subsidy available to claim for previous months, a reimbursement cheque will be requested on your behalf.
3. Please note that Affordable Child Care Benefit application processing can take 6 to 8 weeks.
4. Parents are responsible for paying any parent portion remaining after the deduction of subsidy from the program fees.

5. Parents are responsible for renewing the benefit authorization before it expires. Keep track of the date you will likely not receive notice of expiration in time.
6. 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>

ACCB can be applied to online through the MY FAMILY SERVICES website. All subsidies are processed through our **VWCA Little Steps** license. Alternatively, you can apply through a paper form. DO NOT bring us a form that you have filled out first as it contains your confidential information. Instead, please first ask the childcare manager for a form filled out with our information. You will then fill in the remaining family information and send it to the ministry yourself. If you require assistance with the application process please contact the childcare manager, or the Child Care Resource and Referral Centre 250-382-7000 or MCFD at 1-888-338-6622, option 1.

Parent Code of Conduct

We are very proud of our community. We do ask that parents observe the following as good decorum:

- Treat their children and other children with respect both verbally and physically.
- Treat each staff member with respect.
- Treat each other with respect on school and community centre grounds.
- Use a soft voice while inside the program areas.
- Refrain from using inappropriate language. There are many ears listening.
- If you have a conflict with a staff member, parent, or child, please take it to the Childcare Manager immediately. Any misunderstandings can be cleared up through the office. Unsubstantiated gossip undermines the professionalism of the programs and can be harmful to the community at large.
- Smoking and vaping tobacco or cannabis are strictly prohibited inside the centre or on or near centre property.
- Children will not be released to parents who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances.

Parent Communication

Clear, ongoing communication is an important part of a parent's involvement in their child's care and early learning. We encourage families to speak with educators if they have questions or concerns related to their child or the program. While educators may not always be available for in-depth conversations during drop-off or pick-up, they will work with families to find an appropriate time to connect. Direct all questions regarding fees or enrollment to the Childcare Manager.

The Centre communicates primarily by **email**, using the address provided on your child's registration form. Important information, notices, and updates are shared this way, so it is essential that families ensure their contact information is accurate and that emails are checked regularly, including during holiday periods. We assume emailed communication has been received and read unless it is returned as undeliverable, in which case families will be contacted by phone.

Parents: Notice of Withdrawal and Refund Policy

Parents/Guardians who wish to withdraw their child or reduce the number of days they attend must provide notice to the Childcare Manager, at least a full month (30 days) before their intended withdrawal/change date. This written notice must be received by the last day of the month prior to the last month before you wish to withdraw/reduce your enrollment. Withdrawals with or without notice, and sudden departures are treated the same and are required to pay full fees for the full calendar month following the date of notification/departure/withdrawal. If a child is absent a period of 30 days without any notice or other explanation, that child is then deemed to have given notice, and the family will be required to pay full fees for the following full calendar month.

Parent Involvement

We value strong relationships between our childcare programs and home and encourage parents to be active participants in their child's experience. There are many ways to get involved; you might share a cultural tradition, lead a music or dance activity, or contribute your skills and interests in other ways. Each year, parents are also invited to read a story during Book Month. If you have an idea you'd like to share with the children, please speak with the educators or the Childcare Manager. Your involvement enriches our program and strengthens the connection between home and daycare.

There are also opportunities to engage more broadly within the Community Centre, whether by volunteering at events, helping with ongoing programs, or joining our Board of Directors.

Supporting Respectful Behaviour in Shared Spaces

As part of our daily routine, we teach the children to be respectful and mindful members of our shared community centre. This includes walking indoors, using quiet voices, and not playing on ramps, railings, or in areas outside of our licensed daycare spaces. We kindly ask that parents and caregivers support this important learning by modelling and encouraging the same respectful behaviours during pick-up and drop-off times. While families are always welcome in the community centre, we ask that everyone helps us maintain a calm and considerate atmosphere for all users of the space.

Please remember that certain areas, such as the gym or other program rooms, may appear unoccupied but are not available for general use unless booked. To respect other programs and community members, we ask that all children stay with their caregivers and avoid entering any spaces outside their daycare without permission. Thank you for your support in helping us create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for everyone.

What to bring to Daycare?

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 may 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: raincoat, 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 (*Please follow the *Food and Drink Policy*) and a water bottle needs to be sent each day. Please label all lunch bags, containers, and water bottles with your child's name.
- Rest time: Fitted Standard Crib Sized Sheet/Blanket (labelled). Optional: small stuffed animal, small travel size pillow.

Attendance

Consistent attendance and routine are an essential element that promotes successful integration for each child. It is the responsibility of parents to inform the educators or childcare manager by email or phone if their child is unable to attend, is delayed for any reason, preferably ahead of time. If dropping off or picking up in the middle of the day, please be considerate of disruption to the program (ex during nap/quiet time). Communicate with the educators to coordinate an appropriate time. It is helpful to also keep us informed of plans for vacations, etc. Please note that monthly fees will not be adjusted due to illness or vacation requests.

Separation and Drop off Routine

It is common for children to feel uncertain or emotional when separating from their family, particularly at the beginning or after a prolonged break. We encourage families to keep drop-offs brief and predictable. Parents are welcome to come into the cubby area to support their child in putting away their belongings and using the washroom (Nature Daycare uses the community centre washrooms), then say goodbye before staff take over.

Prolonged goodbyes can make separation more difficult for both children and parents. Please always let your child know when you are leaving; leaving without saying goodbye can undermine trust and make future separations more difficult. Educators will support your child in whatever ways they need once you leave. Parents are also welcome to remain nearby (out of sight) for a short time while staff help their child settle, or to call the program later in the day for an update.

For children who are new to our childcare program, a gradual entry process may be helpful; details are outlined in the Welcome Letter.

Child Pickup Policy

The Centre will only release your child to caregivers whose names are indicated on the registration forms as emergency or authorized pickups. Please include on the Childcare Application Form the name, relationship to child and phone number of anyone who will be picking up your child. Temporary permission may be granted and must be received in writing. Pick up contacts must be responsible adults who are of the legal age 19. Staff will ask for photo ID if they do not recognize the person. Please let us know in advance if you are sending someone to pick up in your place so we can verify they are on your contact list.

Late Pick Up Policy

We do not provide an option for late pickups. It is the parents or guardians' responsibility to pick-up their child on time. Please ensure that you give yourself adequate travel time to arrive 5 minutes before the end of the day. Transportation to and from the daycare is the responsibility of each parent or guardian. If a parent/guardian frequently arrives past their pick up time, the centre reserves the right to terminate services. Please see the *Service Continuity Policy*.

No Show at End of Program

If a child is still at the centre at closing time, the staff will take the following steps.

1. **Attempting to Contact the Parent or Guardian:** Staff will immediately try to reach the parent or guardian using the contact information provided in the child's records.
2. **Contacting Emergency Contacts:** If after several attempts (5 min) the parent or guardian cannot be reached, staff will begin to try to contact the emergency contacts listed in the child's record.
3. **30 min late - Involving Authorities:** If no authorized individuals can be reached and the child remains uncollected, staff will contact local authorities, such as the Ministry for Children and Families and/or the police, to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Toileting Policy

All children must be fully toilet competent before enrolling in our programs. Diapers and pull-ups are not permitted. Our outdoor space is in a public park not close to the washroom, which isn't suitable for ongoing toilet learning, and educators cannot leave the group to support toileting during program time. Children are not permitted to urinate outdoors (nature pee).

We understand that occasional accidents may happen, especially during the first few weeks for new children. If a child regresses or is not fully toilet trained when they start, staff will consult with parents to find a solution. If a reasonable solution cannot be found, a temporary adjustment to program attendance may be necessary until the child is fully toilet competent. Staff will work closely with families to support a positive and successful return to the program.

Sleep/Rest Policy

Based on research showing that adequate rest supports emotional regulation, learning, and development in young children, all children are encouraged to take part in a quiet rest period after lunch. Napping is not required. Children who need sleep will be supported by educators in settling comfortably, while those who do not fall asleep are given the opportunity to rest quietly. After not more than 30 minutes, awake children are invited to get up and engage in calm, quiet activities.

Children ages 3-5 typically require approximately 5.5 to 6.5 hours of wakefulness after an afternoon nap before they are ready for their evening bedtime, so for children who do fall asleep, we ensure that they are awakened between 1:30-2pm. If a child appears genuinely tired, staff may allow them to sleep, even if a "no nap" request is in place, as we prioritize the immediate needs and well-being of the child. We recognize that every child's sleep needs are different and aim to provide a respectful, individualized approach.

Illness

We understand that families may occasionally choose to bring their child to the program with a mild illness. However, our priority is the wellbeing of all children and staff, and the smooth functioning of the program. Children must be well enough to comfortably participate in all daily program activities, including indoor and outdoor play. If a child requires care beyond what can be provided within regular staffing ratios, is unusually lethargic, irritable, in pain, or unable to engage in normal activities, they are not well enough to attend, regardless of whether symptoms are considered contagious.

Below is a general list of illnesses that would prevent a child from attending care and or require families to arrange prompt pick-up:

- A fever exceeding 38°C (100.4°F)
- An infection for which the child has not been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours
- Vomiting, severe headaches, or stomach aches
- Diarrhea
- Persistent coughing or a runny nose with thick discharge
- Communicable illnesses such as pink eye or head lice

(Parents are required to notify the Centre immediately if their child contracts a communicable disease.)

Please note: Children should remain at home until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours **without the use of symptom or fever-reducing medication**. Program environments are active, social spaces where illness can spread quickly. If staff observe that a child is not feeling well enough to participate, families will be contacted and asked to arrange prompt pick-up.

Food and Drink Policy

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 inform the staff of any dietary needs or allergies.

Please pack two healthy snacks and a lunch from home that follow Canada's Food Guide <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>. **Do not send candy, gummies, cookies, cake, pastries, chocolates, chips, juice or pop.** Foods with high sugar content are not allowed in our programs.

We cannot reheat foods so please send foods that need to stay warm in a thermal container. Please include all necessary utensils required to eat the lunch and snacks. Include an icepack in the lunch box to keep the foods fresh.

Nut Policy

In the event that we have a child attending one of our programs with a severe nut allergy, the program will then enforce a **NUT FREE** policy. Please ask the educator about the status of allergies in the room before including any nut products in your child's snack/lunch. Substitutes such as seed or soy butters (ex: Sunbutter/Wowbutter) would be permissible in a nut free zone, however we would greatly appreciate it if you could include a note for educators letting them know that it is not a nut butter.

Birthdays/Special Occasions and Shared Food

We understand that families may have a desire to celebrate special occasions within the daycare environment. We request that this is done without the use of foods, cakes or sweets. The educators in your child's program can help to suggest some alternatives such as a special theme day to mark the occasion (favorite colour day or pajama day) or you could bring a small gift bag to hand out.

Clothing and Possessions

Please ensure that children are dressed appropriate to the weather and with clothing that they can easily put on and off themselves. Shoes/boots must be appropriate for active play with a closed toe and heel. Crocs and flip flops or fancy dress shoes are not appropriate for outside play.

A second set of clothing must be left at the centre at all times in case of "mishaps". Please remember to bring a spare set of clean clothes if the previous ones were taken home to be washed. All clothing should be labeled with your child's name. Please be sure to update your child's spare clothes seasonally so that they remain appropriate for the weather.

Indoor / Outdoor Shoes (Boots)

All children must have a pair of shoes for indoor use as well as a pair of outdoor shoes and a pair of boots. This will help maintain a clean program environment.

Bikes, Scooters and Strollers

Children's bikes, scooters or strollers must not be left in the classroom or inside the community centre. There is limited space outside where you can lock things up at the bike stand as well as one ring on the wall to lock a larger items like stroller or trailer. Since there is very limited space, preference would be that you take these items with you after you drop off your child.

Home Toys

Our program provides a wide variety of toys and activities for children to enjoy, but sometimes children may want to bring a small toy for comfort, to sleep with, or something special from home. Children may bring one or two small items, which are their responsibility. Families understand that the Centre cannot be held responsible if these items are lost or damaged.

Active Play Policy

We acknowledge the importance of active play in all our programs. Gross motor development is just as important as fine motor development. Little Steps Nature Daycare typically stays outside for at least half the day, longer in warmer weather. When we are outside, we have outdoor equipment that the children can explore and lots of time to explore natural materials. We will go out in ALL weather conditions and enjoy the outdoors in all seasons. Please see "What to Bring" to ensure your child is dressed appropriately for all outdoor conditions.

Screens Policy

We do not provide any screen time in our daycares.

Sun Safety

To protect children from excessive sun exposure during seasons when children wear clothes that expose more skin, we ask parents to apply sunscreen before arrival each day. Parents must provide a labeled broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen lotion (no aerosol sprays) to be kept at the daycare, and educators will reapply before afternoon outdoor play. Each child should also bring a labeled wide brimmed hat for sun protection, a refillable water bottle, sunglasses are optional. Sun-protective clothing is also recommended. As our playground area has limited shade, staff assess conditions daily when deciding where to go in order to limit time in direct sunlight during peak hours.

Privacy Policy

VWCA respects the right of individuals to the protection of their personal and family's information. VWCA is committed to maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and accuracy of personal information it collects, uses and discloses. VWCA staff and volunteers who have access to personal information follow fair information principles, in keeping with privacy laws. Families in our programs are in turn expected to respect the privacy of other participants and staff. In accordance with British Columbia's privacy and child protection laws, there may be circumstances where VWCA is legally required to share personal information. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures to child protection authorities, law enforcement, or health professionals when there is reason to believe that a child or individual may be at risk of harm. In such cases, only the minimum necessary information will be shared to meet legal or safety obligations. If at any time you feel your privacy is not being appropriately respected, please bring it up to the Team Lead and/or the Childcare Manager.

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.

Duty to Report

We are required by law under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* to report any suspected cases or disclosures of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. This duty includes concerns from observations, behaviours, or statements that suggest a child's wellbeing may be at risk. Our responsibility is to report concerns; we do not assess intent, determine cause, or decide whether harm has occurred. Investigation and follow-up are the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and/or the police.

To avoid interfering with an investigation, the centre does not notify families that a report has been made. Following a report, the centre's role is to continue providing a safe, supportive, and consistent environment for the child and to cooperate fully with the investigation process. Staff are not able to discuss the details of any report.

Child Guidance / Harassment and Bullying Prevention

At Victoria West Community Centre, all children have the right to learn and play in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment. Our programs focus on physical safety, social connectedness, and protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Our approach to behaviour guidance is positive, proactive, and responsive to each child's developmental stage. We support children in developing self-control, confidence, and respectful interactions through teaching, modelling,

and co-regulation. Children are encouraged to make safe choices, treat others and property with respect, and follow program's routines.

Behaviours that impact safety or wellbeing are actions that place the child, other children, educators, or Centre property at risk. This may include physical aggression, leaving supervised areas, excessive or prolonged screaming or yelling, or repeated behaviours that cause emotional harm or distress to others. Educators respond to behaviours that impact safety or wellbeing with guidance, support, and problem-solving strategies to help children develop safer and more appropriate ways to interact. Staff work collaboratively with families to support this process.

When these behaviours persist despite ongoing guidance and collaboration, families may be advised that the child cannot attend the program temporarily, or until appropriate strategies or external supports are in place. If the program is determined to no longer be a safe or appropriate placement for the child or others, the child may be withdrawn from the program. Documentation may be completed and shared with our Licensing Officer as required.

Accidents/Incidences

All accidents/incidences involving children are documented at the Centre.

In case of a Minor Accident or Incident:

The child/children will be tended to immediately by a staff member. Appropriate first aid will be administered, if necessary (soap and water and/or an icepack, bandage), or comfort and support given should that be more appropriate. It will then be shared with the parent/authorized person picking up the child that day as well as being documented in the classroom communication book and/or on a "VWCA Incident Report Form" which is kept on file for the year.

In case of a Serious Accident:

- The child will be tended to immediately by a staff member who will ascertain the extent of the injury, begin first aid if it is appropriate and inform the Childcare Manager as soon as possible through another staff member.
- Parents/caregivers will be notified.
- For serious injuries, the teacher, Childcare Manager and/or Centre Manager will also call 911. (Parents will be expected to assume responsibility for any expenses incurred.)
- Should the child need to go to the hospital and parents cannot be reached, they will be accompanied by a staff member who will take along all their necessary medical information, care card number, family doctor etc.

Fires, Earthquakes and other Major Disasters:

- VWCA has an Emergency Preparedness Plan as well as an Emergency Procedures Flowchart, which addresses the procedures staff would take in the event of a fire or bomb threat, a minor or major earthquake (including tsunami), a Lock Down or a major weather event.
- The children practice fire drills once a month and earthquake drills at least once a year. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is practiced at least once each year by the staff.
- **We ask that you DO NOT phone the Centre.** Phone lines must be kept open for emergency calls.
- **TUNE into local radio station CFX 1070** using a battery-operated radio or car radio for information and direction.
- **ESTABLISH an out-of-area contact person.** Phone service will likely be limited during a major disaster. It may be much easier to phone someone outside the region than to contact someone locally.
- **Electronic Mail** may serve as a means of communication.

- **EpiPens and Emergency Medication.** Time and safety permitting staff will do their best to ensure that EpiPens or other emergency medications are taken with them during an evacuation.

Assurance of Compliance with Licensing Standards

VWCA Little Steps Nature Daycare is a licensed childcare facility operating in full compliance with the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the *Child Care Licensing Regulation* of British Columbia. Our program is inspected and monitored by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Licensing Program to ensure we meet or exceed all required standards related to health, safety, staffing, and programming.

Our current childcare facility license is visibly posted in the Childcare Manager's office for your review. We are committed to transparency, and all VIHA inspection reports for our facility are publicly available through the Island Health website at: <https://inspections.myhealthdepartment.com/island-health/program-ccfl>. You can find our program under the facility name: VWCA Little Steps Childcare

Staff Qualifications and Criminal Record Checks

At VWCA all educators hold the necessary education and training as outlined in childcare regulations and are certified by the BC ECE Registry. You can find these certifications on the wall in each classroom. All ECE's continue ongoing learning and professional development. All Educators must complete a Criminal Record Check (CRC) with a vulnerable sector. CRCs are reviewed and updated as required under licensing standards.

We are proud of our team's training and professionalism, and we encourage families to speak with the Manager if they have any questions about staff qualifications or experience.

Concerns and Issues Resolution

If any parent wishes to clarify or discuss any matter or concern about the programs or their child, the following guidelines should be followed:

Issue/ Concern	Contact
-your child's needs	-one of the educators in your child's program
-your involvement with an individual educator	-the staff person directly (using discretion as to time and place.)
-general program matters or concerns about program environment	-Program Team Lead or Childcare Manager
-personnel issues in general	-Childcare Manager, Centre Manager or Executive Director
-financial matters	-Childcare Manager
-buildings and grounds	-Centre Manager
-overall functioning of the Centre	-Centre Manager or Executive Director
-registration and enrolment	-Childcare Manager

Appeals Policy

- If a concern is not addressed satisfactorily with the staff member(s) involved, following the above guidelines, the Executive will make every attempt to solve the matter.
- If the parent feels that the matter has not reached a satisfactory conclusion, the parent should present the matter, in writing, to the Executive Director.
- If a concern is in regard to the Executive Director, the matter should be presented in writing to the Board. The Board will contact all parties involved and after careful consideration, will resolve the matter.

Service Continuity Policy

We understand the importance of mutual understanding and adherence to our childcare policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. Our aim is to ensure a harmonious and safe environment for all participants in our programs. Your cooperation ensures a positive and enriching experience for all. In the rare instance where policies or procedures are not being upheld, we follow a progressive approach:

1. **Reminders and Guidance:** Our staff are committed to assisting parents/guardians in understanding and complying with our policies. They will remind you of the policies and encourage you to review the parent handbook.
2. **Supportive Correction:** Continuous non-compliance may necessitate further action. In such cases, we will offer additional support and clarification to facilitate adherence to our policies.
3. **Service Termination:** In instances where repeated non-compliance persists, we reserve the right to discontinue childcare services. This decision is made with careful consideration and in the best interests of all children, families and staff within our childcare community.

Preventing Contagious Disease Outbreaks Guidance for Childcare Settings

The Covid-19 pandemic taught us all how important it is to protect ourselves and others from contagious diseases. We must work together to ensure that our childcare spaces are safe and healthy places for our children, families and educators.

If you're ill—stay at home. All children and staff who are ill with fever, cold, influenza, or infectious respiratory symptoms of any kind need to stay home. Parents of children with cold or influenza-like symptoms should keep their children home. Children can return to childcare 24 hours after their symptoms have ceased, without the use of fever reducing medication.

Continue to encourage hand hygiene. As we know, little and big hands pick up germs easily, from anything they touch, and can spread those germs to objects, surfaces, food, and people. Handwashing with soap and water is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of the illness.

Children forget about proper hand washing so practice often and teach them to wash their hands properly in a fun, relaxed way. Everyone should wash their hands more often!

When sinks for hand washing are simply not available, you may use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (ABHS) containing at least 60% alcohol. Know that this is not very effective when a child's hands are quite soiled, when coming in from outside, for example. Read labels and wash hands with sanitizer the same way you would wash with soap and water.

Six steps to proper handwashing

1. Wet hands with warm running water.
2. Apply a small amount of liquid soap. Antibacterial soap is not required.
3. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds (sing ABC's). Rub palms, back of hands, between fingers and under nails creating a lather.
4. Rinse off all soap with running water.
5. Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
6. Discard the used towel in a waste container.

Children should wash their hands...

- When they arrive at the Centre before entering the program
- Before eating and drinking
- After playing outside
- After sneezing or coughing into hands
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

Cough and sneeze etiquette: Cough and sneeze into an arm or tissue.

Please keep your child at home if they have any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, runny nose, 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.



Contact information:

Childcare Manager Email: childcaremanager@victoriawest.ca

Team Lead Email: outofschoolcare@victoriawest.ca

Childcare Office Phone: (250) 590-8922 ex:1

Daycare Cell (text or call): 778-700-7749

For all enquiries regarding financial matters, enrollment, general program matters or concerns about the program environment or staff, please contact the Childcare manager by phone or email.

Please contact your child's program directly by phone/text (no voicemail) if they will be away/sick/or if you are running late. If your child is sick with something potentially contagious to others, you must also contact the childcare manager by email and list their symptoms.

Victoria West Community Centre: 250-590-8922