

Preschool Parent Handbook



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About Us

Welcome

Welcome to Extra Steps Preschool! We are a licensed private facility offering high quality, enhanced programs for preschoolers. As Early Childhood Educators we are dedicated to promoting the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and linguistic development of young children.

Why Choose Extra Steps for Your Preschooler?

We offer:

- a fun, friendly, play-based learning atmosphere which engages each child's interest
- a team of qualified and experienced Early Childhood Education staff with integrity and a passion for their chosen field of work
- a high ratio of staff to children
- a variety of scheduling options and longer class times
- a beautiful facility located in the heart of the Douglas Park community
- solid knowledge about what it really means for your child to be "ready for kindergarten" and how to accomplish that
- an approach to learning that respects your child's individual temperament, stage of development, likes and dislikes
- daily routines that are flexible, not rigid, and responsive to your child's needs
- formal and informal opportunities for you to communicate with staff about how your child is doing
- newsletters to keep you informed about class activities

We encourage you to think about what you want for your preschooler and to do your research on available preschool programs. Have a question about how we do things and why? Please just ask!

In the Classroom

Daily Schedule

Our class times are **8:30-12:00** and **1:00-4:30**. Our **3.5 hour daily class** schedule is as follows:

Meet & Greet (20 mins)

free time, explore the room, chat with friends...

Opening Circle (25 mins)

calendar, weather, numbers, songs, days activities...

Free choice in Play-based Learning Centres (80 mins)

guided play, art & crafts, toys, baking, open snack time...

Middle Circle (25 mins)

puppets, stories, sharing time, games...

Outside Time (45 mins)

organized outside activities, nature walks, sports games, playground equipment...

Closing Circle (15 mins)

stories, talking & listening, wrapping up, upcoming classes...

Please note that schedule and activities may vary depending on the day's events. In addition, we are flexible, not rigid, about our schedule because we understand how young children learn! For more details, please talk to staff.

Learning Tools

Outside

As fresh air, sunlight and yes, rain, are very important for children's healthy growth, we will regularly go out on little adventures throughout our neighbourhood. These experiences are fun, memorable and a natural teaching tool to help children understand the larger world around them.

Heather Park is a beautiful spot just a five-minute walk from the centre. It offers many enjoyable outside activities for preschoolers. Other destinations can include, for example, the local corner store, post office, dentist's office, a neighbourhood grocery store or special learning program. We also have longer field trips to places such as museums, the airport or community gardens.

Your child will enjoy the fun, stimulation and discovery of our many outings and field trips, which are incorporated into our classes so that the learning outcomes continue long after they are over.

Inside

Our preschool room is spacious, warm, comforting and flooded with natural light. It is designed around children's needs and is set up to foster children's development.

Our learning tools are inspiring and challenging. Some of the hands-on indoor learning tools your child will be using in our preschool include:

table top manipulative toys	sand	felt boards	arts
floor toys	water	dress-up	crafts
balls	carpentry	puppets	
bean bags		housekeeping	

Some of the indoor activities your child will take part in include:

sports	songs	circle time
games	music	sharing time

Whatever our environment, outside or inside, we promote an enchanting, enjoyable, stress-free atmosphere where the children are encouraged to learn about and gradually demonstrate sharing, teamwork, self-control and independence. They acquire language skills and problem-solving techniques in their play process. All of this helps their developmental growth and prepares them for kindergarten and beyond.

Children's Personal Items

Please provide a pair of inside shoes (with your child's name written on the inside) that can be left at the centre. They will be kept in your child's own special cubby box. Inside shoes help to keep our floor space clean and allow us to use it for more activities.

We understand that children sometimes want to bring in toys and personal items from home, however these items can get lost in our very active environment. This would be disruptive to the class and upsetting to your child, so please leave these items at home.

Communication Tools

Our communication tools are designed to ensure that you are fully aware of what is happening in your child's preschool class.

The **bulletin/white board** located in our front entrance provides up to date information on our program, class activities, useful resources and other related topics.

Our **newsletter** is sent out by e-mail periodically. It is full of past, present and future monthly activities, events, projects, songs, tips and much more.

Parent/Staff Conferences

We invite you to talk to staff anytime, contact us by e-mail (info@extrasteps.ca), or make an appointment to meet with us to share information on any aspect of your child's progress at preschool. Our door is always open.

End-of-Year Assessments

At the end of the school year, you may receive an assessment of your child's growth and development in a variety of areas. Nothing will come as a surprise to you, as you will receive informal feedback on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

Admissions & Withdrawal

Enrolment Requirements

All children must be at least 30 months of age and turning 3 in the same calendar year as their start date. Toilet trained before starting our preschool program is preferred but we can make some exceptions, so speak to us on the matter.

Class Description

All of our classes are **3.5 hours in length** and our **staff-to-child ratio is at least 3:20**. This means your child is not rushed and gets a lot of individual attention. It also gives us more time to offer bigger projects and other special programs throughout the year.

We understand that making your child's preschool fit into your busy schedule can be difficult. Our extended class times make it easier to schedule your childcare needs. While getting those extra learning opportunities, your child also has more supervised time to interact with their friends and peers in an extended class environment.

Registration Requirements

To register your child in Extra Steps Preschool Program, we require:

First Step:

- A completed Class Registration Preference Form
- A non-refundable registration fee of \$65, payable by cheque/ e-transfer/cash
- A deposit equivalent to one month's fees (which will cover fees for June of your child's school year), payable by cheque/e-transfer/cash

Second Step:

- A completed Registration Form Package
- A copy of your child's birth certificate
- Pre-Authorized Debit Form completed to cover the remaining months of your child's school year which will be withdrawn starting on the 1st of each month your child's starts.

Any cheques returned from your financial institution will incur an NSF fee of \$50.

Registration Package

All registration packages and information are available at the preschool or from our website (www.extrasteps.ca).

Class Times & Fees

Option 1

Days: Mon/Tues/Weds/Thurs/Fri

Time: 8:30 – 12:00

Parents choose any combination from 1 to 5 classes per week

Fees: \$180/month for 1 day/week
\$275/month for 2 days/week
\$380/month for 3 days/week
\$510/month for 4 days/week
\$655/month for 5 days/week

Ages: Children who are 30 months at start date and 3 years old before Dec 31st of this calendar year

Option 2

Days: Mon/Tues/Weds/Thurs/Fri

Parents choose any combination from 1 to 5 classes per week

Time: 1:00 – 4:30

Fees: \$180/month for 1 day/week
\$275/month for 2 days/week
\$380/month for 3 days/week
\$510/month for 4 days/week
\$655/month for 5 days/week

Ages: Children who are 3 or 4 years old before Dec 31st of this calendar year

Family's Request for Withdrawal

A deposit equivalent to one month's fees is required at the time of registration. It is held interest-free and put towards the fees for the month of June. During the school year, if you wish to withdraw or make changes from the program early, you must give a full thirty day notice in writing by the 1st day of the month prior to the change for a full refund of your deposit. Failure to do so will mean that your deposit is forfeited.

Notes:

1. The last date to be eligible to withdraw or make changes **during the school year** and receive a refund is March 1st for leaving April 1st. No deposits will be returned after this deadline.
2. Registration for the September school year takes place in early spring each year. For withdrawals or changes prior to starting in September **for the new school year**, there is no deposit refund! (Once you start in September then you can refer to number 1 above)

Facility's Request for Withdrawal

Extra Steps Learning Centres Inc. can terminate its services to a family under the following circumstances:

- If fees for services are not paid in full and on time and suitable arrangements cannot be agreed upon;
- If the centre is unable to satisfactorily resolve a problem with a family;
- If a family member harasses, threatens or commits a violent or unlawful act toward a staff member, child or other family involved in the program;
- If a family picks up their child late three times or more without having made previous suitable arrangements;
- If, in the assessment of the staff, a child is unable to be safely managed in a group of children within the given adult-to-child ratio. In this case, termination of services will be a measure of last resort.

Open House & Registration

Once a year we hold a pre-registration for families already enrolled in our program. An open house is then held around February or March (dates to be announced) at which time other members of the public are invited to register their children. Parents are advised to register as early as possible, as there is a great demand for our preschool spaces.

If you would like to know more about our program or visit us prior to the open house date, please set up an appointment. We would be more than happy to make arrangements to meet with you if we are taking appointments at that time.

Registration Priority

Our registration takes place as follows:

1. Families currently enrolled in our program
2. Previously registered families (siblings) that are on our waitlist
3. Families on our waitlist
4. General public

Yearly Calendar Information

Start & Finish Dates

Classes are scheduled to begin the 2nd week of September and end the 3rd week of June.

Holidays & Breaks

We strive to match the holidays and seasonal breaks of Vancouver public schools however this can be hard to do so watch our calendar. All Extra Steps Preschool dates will be confirmed in our school year calendar prior to each school year start.

Professional Days

Our entire staff takes at least four professional days during the school year. These dates will be confirmed in our school year calendar.

Though we do not like to close the centre for a whole day, and know it may be an inconvenience to you, we firmly believe that everyone – staff, parents and children – benefits from professional days. They allow us to continually improve our education about early childhood learning and give us new ideas that we can bring back to your child's preschool class.

Class Photos

During the school year a professional photographer will take individual and group photographs of the children. They are a wonderful memento for parents and you will have a variety of options if you wish to order them.

Questions Parents Ask

Can I drop by during class time?

Yes but please be aware that your child's behavior can vary with sudden changes at school.

How will I know how my child is doing?

Just ask! We firmly believe that giving you honest, helpful feedback when you ask for it, even on a moment's notice, to help you understand how and what your child is doing in preschool, is one of our greatest skills, and one that can be overlooked by preschools. We are also committed to letting you know if any issues come up with your child that we think we should talk to you about.

How do I deal with my child's separation for the first days of preschool?

Separation anxiety in children is very natural. Children do grow out of this condition, generally by four years of age. If your child has tantrums, yells, is clingy or cries a lot, be reassured that these are all normal reactions and show that they have a loving bond with you. Most children tend to stop crying about three or four minutes after their parent leaves. Separation anxiety can come and go for a while, however children soon learn to adapt and this does not cause them long-term harm.

We recommend that you try these useful tips to help ease this transition:

- If possible, visit the preschool, teachers or other children prior to the first day.
- Have a quick good-bye with a hug, kiss, or special wave.
- Let them know who will be picking them up.
- Do not sneak out as this can make your child distrustful.
- Do not bribe your child.

Once you leave, remember that you are leaving your child with staff who genuinely care about them, who are skilled at getting to know them, and who have experience assisting parents and children with this process.

How does play help my child learn?

Although adults generally separate “working” and “playing” it is important to remember that **playing is the work of young children.**

As your child plays they connect their play objects to what they are thinking and observing in the world. Play allows them to learn math and spatial concepts, language skills, gross and fine motor skills, social skills, and to express themselves emotionally and creatively.

Play is how children naturally learn about themselves and the world around them. That is why high quality preschools make play-based learning the core of their programs.

Will my child learn to read and write?

We do not “teach” reading and writing per se. That is not the purpose of preschool. Your child may be able to read and write before kindergarten but that depends on many factors. The purpose of preschool is to assist your child to be physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and linguistically ready for kindergarten.

If you are anxious about this question, please talk to our staff about the skills and developmental stages that kindergarten teachers hope to see in their new students in order for them to be truly successful in school.

Do I qualify for subsidy dollars?

You may be qualified to receive government subsidy dollars to reduce the cost of preschool. To find out if you qualify, please contact:

Child Care Subsidy Service Centre
PO Box 9953 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9R3
Tel: 1-888-338-6622
Fax: 1-877-544-0699

Online applications can be found at:

<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/application.htm>

Please make sure that you meet your deadlines for filing with the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre, as we require their confirmation on all amounts you are eligible to receive prior to the first of each month that fees are due.

If we do not have this confirmation, you will be required to pay the fees in full and receive credit for them when we receive the confirmation.

What do I need to send with my child each day?

Your child's inside shoes are kept at the centre. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather, muddy buddies and rain boots are important for the rain as we do a lot of puddle jumping! Otherwise all you need to send with them is a healthy snack in a labeled snack bag and a labeled water bottle to leave at school or bring back and forth each class. If anything else is ever needed, you will be given plenty of notice beforehand.

Policies & Procedures

Absence

If your child will be away for any reason please notify us as soon as possible, as it may change our daily class planning. Email is the best way as we do not always answer the phone.

Child Abuse

We are required by law to report any suspected or disclosed abuse of a child by anyone to the Ministry for Children and Family Development. In this situation, we are not allowed to notify the child's parents unless we are instructed to do so by the Ministry.

Confidentiality

We have a strict policy of confidentiality. Anything said between staff members, between staff and parents, or between staff and management is kept completely confidential.

In addition, we respect the children by not speaking to any other families about a child that is not theirs. If two children are involved in an incident together, we will explain what happened to the parents without naming the other child.

Conflict Resolution

We are committed to providing a caring and supportive environment for our children and families. You are strongly encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns about your child's program or our procedures with staff. If a conflict arises, our goal is to resolve differences of opinion and find solutions that everyone can accept.

If a problem continues, we can arrange a meeting between families, staff and management to define the issues, state differing points of view, and identify possible solutions.

If you wish to appeal a decision, you can have a further meeting with the Directors, Robb Weaver and Sarah Little. The Directors' decision will be final.

If the issue has still not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may file a complaint with Community Care Facilities Licensing of Vancouver Coastal Health.

In the case of persistent conflicts, when all reasonable attempts to solve problems have failed, the family will be asked to make other preschool arrangements (see “Facility’s Request for Withdrawal”).

Criminal Record Checks

All staff members, Early Childhood Education students, or volunteers that have any involvement with our program are first required to provide us with a Criminal Record Check as per our childcare license from Vancouver Coastal Health.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

To ensure the safety of all our children, we have a strict policy for signing in and signing out when each child arrives and leaves the centre. Your child will only be released to you or to the person who dropped them off. Anyone else who arrives to pick up your child must be listed on your child’s registration form and must provide photo ID to staff unless you have informed us prior. In this situation, staff members would still exercise caution and contact you if they were concerned about the pick-up for any reason.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Fire drills are held once a month as required by fire authorities. The Director sounds a bell and the staff follows the emergency evacuation procedure for the centre. Staff members have children line up quickly and quietly. They then take a first aid kit, attendance sheets and the children to a designated location to conduct a head count and attendance.

The Director gathers emergency cards, keys, and staff in/out sheets; checks all rooms, washrooms and closets; and meets staff at the designated location. The Director also records information from the event: the date and time it took place and how long it took to evacuate everyone. This information is then posted for viewing in the centre.

Earthquake drills are held once a month. During the drill children are taught to stay away from windows and to “duck, cover and hold” until shaking stops.

Staff members have children line up quickly and quietly if required to leave the building. They then take a first aid kit, attendance sheets and the children to a designated location to conduct a head count and attendance.

The Director gathers emergency cards, keys and staff in/out sheets; checks all rooms, washrooms and closets; and meets staff at the designated location.

In the event of a real fire, earthquake or other emergency, parents (or others listed on their child's registration form) will be contacted immediately.

Our emergency routes are posted in the centre. Our designated meeting place will be either Heather Park at 18th Ave. & Heather or Douglas Park Community Centre at 801 W22nd Ave. Please make yourself familiar with this information, and be sure to keep your contact information up to date.

Guidance

Our program is designed to maximize fun and learning and minimize any problems with children's behaviour. We prevent problems by ensuring that our classroom environment is stimulating and rewarding and is set up to meet the children's stages of development and individual needs. In addition, our staff have realistic expectations with clear limitations for the children, and use a gentle, positive approach at all times.

If your child needs guidance, staff will speak to them at their eye level, using positive words and tones, to help them understand. The focus will be on the behaviour and they will be redirected to a new activity if necessary.

We do not use a punitive "time-out" method of separating a child from everyone if their behaviour is disruptive. However, a "time-in" method is used by staff, but only if a child needs time away from other children to settle down. In that case, a staff member will sit with your child (for no longer than one minute for each year of your child's age) to help them to calm down and understand what has just happened.

If all our strategies are not effective, we will meet with you to decide on other appropriate actions.

Under no circumstances do we ever use corporal punishment of any kind.

If any child endangers the safety of others, we have to remove them immediately from the program.

We ask you to keep us informed of any changes, big or small, in your child's life and/or routine, as this can cause behavioural changes in your child at preschool.

Holiday Celebrations

We honour and celebrate all Canada's major holidays and celebrations in our preschool. In addition, we will incorporate other cultural celebrations, as much as we are capable of, out of respect for the children in our program and the diversity of our community. If you would like us

to celebrate something meaningful to your family that is not already on our calendar, please let us know at least one month in advance and we will do our best to accommodate your request. If there are celebrations you prefer your child not be involved in, please discuss this with us prior to the date so we can accommodate your preference.

Illness

If your child is ill, they will need your loving care and should not be at preschool the day their symptoms appear. They are permitted to return after being free of symptoms for a 24-hour period. For the sake of all the children and staff at the centre, we cannot make exceptions to this policy.

Runny noses are a common part of all children's lives, however if the mucus is thick and coloured it is usually a sign of infection. These symptoms need to be looked after, as should diarrhea, vomiting, fever or any other signs that your child is not well. If the illness is more serious, such as open sores or contagious diseases such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, etc., then you may need to provide clearance from a doctor before your child can return. Please check with staff if you have any questions.

If your child becomes ill while at preschool, they will be cared for in a quiet area and you will be notified to come and pick them up.

In case of emergency, 911 will be called and your child will be taken to hospital, accompanied by a staff member who will bring the child's emergency card and medical information. You will be notified immediately.

Inclusion

We are committed to including, not excluding, children. If your child has special needs please let us know. We will not turn a child away if we can accommodate their special requirements, together with you and/or with community resources.

Inspection Visits

Extra Steps is a private facility licensed by Vancouver Coastal Health, who will make regular inspection visits to ensure we are following all required safety procedures. This includes checking all equipment and programs. All inspection reports will be posted and/or on file in our centre for viewing anytime.

Lateness

All families are expected to follow our hours of operation. We cannot tolerate lateness as it is disruptive to our program and does not meet our childcare standards. If there is an **emergency** that forces you to be late for picking up your child, you must contact us immediately so we can agree on other arrangements.

Medication

All medications must be stored by staff in an appropriate lock box or approved area. They must be in original prescription containers, labelled with your child's information and dosage. If your child is being treated with over-the-counter medication, you must provide a doctor's note with instructions and your child's name. We also require you and a staff member to fill out a form when you arrive at the centre with your child.

Missing Child Procedures

Entrances to and from the preschool are always supervised by at least one member of staff at drop-off and pick-up times. We use child safety gates for additional security and can bolt doors once all children have been dropped off.

If a child goes missing from the centre, we follow this procedure:

- The person in charge carries out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area.
- Attendance is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security.
- The person in charge talks to staff to establish what happened.
- If the child is not found, the child's parent is contacted and the police are called.
- The person in charge contacts Vancouver Coastal Health as soon as possible.

On outings, children are counted and assigned to specific staff members. If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending, we follow this procedure:

- Staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity.
- The person in charge is informed (if they are not on the outing), and they then make their way to the venue to aid the search, to be the point of contact for police, and to support staff.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the centre.

- The person in charge of the preschool contacts the child's parent, who makes their way to the centre or outing (as decided by the person in charge).
- Staff contact the police and report the child as missing.
- In an indoor venue, staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The person in charge contacts Vancouver Coastal Health as soon as possible.

Nutrition & Snacks

We believe in healthy food choices which promote positive growth and development in children. Please provide your child with snack items that are healthy and from a couple of food groups according to the Canada Food Guide. We will have examples of snacks and any allergy alerts at the beginning of the school year.

During snack time children are taught about table manners, cleanliness, and food choices to promote healthy living

Safety on Outings & Field Trips

At least two to three adults accompany the class when they walk to and from the park or go on other outings depending on staff/child ratios for that class. We always carry a first aid kit and emergency cards, and teach the children about safety, stranger tips and rules to follow when outside the centre.

On walks, children are required to walk in pairs, holding a rope and/or independent walking in the group and adults are positioned at the front, middle and end of the group of children. For bigger planned field trips, you will receive detailed information including things like transportation plans, ratio numbers, times and drop off/pick up info. You will receive an email in advance of the event.

Smoking

No smoking is allowed by anyone in our building, on our site, or during any of our outings or field trips.

Sunscreen

On days where there is bright sun or sun with snow on the ground, we expect you to put sunscreen on your child before arriving to class. If an unexpected situation arises and your child needs sunscreen, we may apply our own, unless you have instructed us otherwise beforehand.

Your child will have a rewarding, fun, safe learning experience at Extra Steps.

Have more questions?

Just call or e-mail us.

Want to schedule a visit?

Contact us as soon as possible.

Ready to register your child?

See page 9 of this handbook.

Already registered?

Be sure to read the entire handbook.

***The greatest poem ever known
Is one all poets have outgrown:
The poetry, innate, untold,
Of being only four years old.***

~Christopher Morley, To a Child

