

GUELPH OUTDOOR PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN



Parent Handbook

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PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten provides a safe, nurturing environment where children can develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively through playful, hands-on experiences and meaningful interactions. Children spend as much of their day as possible outdoors where they are provided with an optimal environment for early childhood development. The outdoors offers an abundance of sensory experiences, more diverse gross and fine motor challenges, varied open-ended materials, and endless opportunities for imaginative play, all of which are crucial to all areas of development. In addition, children will develop a sense of wonder and a deeper respect for our environment.

Because children are inherently curious and eager to learn, an Emergent curriculum model is used. Staff follow the children's lead and base the curriculum on the children's interests. We maintain high staff to child ratios so children receive more opportunities for meaningful interactions. Staff and children learn and discover answers together through hands on experiences, experiments, and external resources. When children learn about what is meaningful and interesting to them, they gain a joy for learning that opens the door to lifelong learning.

A schedule is followed to ensure a sense of predictability within the day, with room for changes based on children's needs and interests. Children are given ample unhurried opportunities to socialize, express emotions, create, play, develop physical and self help skills, ask questions and find answers. Our days are spent exploring the Ignatius Jesuit Centre property, including the forests, creek, living willow dome, wetlands, orchards, and gardens. Staff are always close by to provide children with gentle guidance and a sense of security. Children in our program gain self confidence, independence, and respect for themselves, others, and the environment.

Safety is always a top priority at our centre. All activities are planned with appropriate safety considerations made, including daily safety checks of field trip locations and weather conditions, appropriate clothing checks, well-trained, CPR and First Aid Certified staff, site specific safety policies, and high staff to child ratios.

We strive to develop strong partnerships with families to ensure that our program meets the needs of all children and families we serve. Parents are encouraged to participate in the program by volunteering their time, contributing skills, knowledge, and resources, and influencing centre policies and procedures. Parents are a child's first and most important teacher, and are our best resource for making sure children's individual needs are met.

The children are given two snacks and a meal each day. The menu is guided by recommendations by Canada's Food Guide, with an emphasis on healthy, palatable, varied, and whole foods. All meals and snacks are freshly prepared on site. Ingredients are sourced locally, seasonally and organically as much as possible. Mealtimes are an enjoyable opportunity for everyone to come together for nourishment and pleasant conversation.

Staff are trained professionals, dedicated to the education and care of children and building a harmonious relationship with nature. Staff work in a team driven environment that promotes open communication, opportunities for professional development, input into decision making, and financial recognition of the value of their work.

OUR MISSION

The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten aims to provide children with high quality early childhood education and care in a stimulating environment that takes learning and play outdoors. Through direct, playful interactions with each other and our environment, we aim to help children to develop a sense of wonder and respect for nature, promote excellent physical and mental health, build relationships based on care and respect, and encourage a joy for lifelong learning. Through play and exploration in meadow, forest, stream, river, farm and garden environments we strive to constantly find meaningful ways for children to connect to each other, themselves, and the living world around them.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Attendance And Schedule Policies

'Scheduled day' refers to any days for which your child holds a reserved space at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten.

Daily Attendance

You are required to notify a teacher of your child's arrival and departure. If your child will be absent on his/her scheduled day, please inform us as early in the day as possible and state the reason. To protect the health of all the children, please let the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten know immediately if your child has a communicable disease.

Notice of Schedule Change

Wherever possible, the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten will attempt to accommodate a family's request for a schedule change. A two-month written notice is required.

Notice of Withdrawal

A two-month written notice is required prior to withdrawing a child from the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten. If sufficient notice is not given, payment for all scheduled days during the corresponding period is required. If the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten is able to fill the space prior to the end of the notice period, you would have the opportunity to withdraw earlier.

Leave of Absence

A two month written notice is required prior to a leave of absence from the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten. If sufficient notice is not given, payment for all scheduled days during the corresponding period is required. The minimum amount of time for a leave of absence is 3 months. The leave of absence does not guarantee the child a space upon return, but rather ensures that the child is given priority for returning and is placed on the internal waiting list.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Fees

Fees for a full day at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten are \$60 per day, which includes lunch and 2 snacks for your child.

Monthly fees are calculated based on the number of scheduled days the child will attend care that month, (including statutory holidays and vacation days).

Payments

Payments are due on the first business day of the month preceding care, and should be made by cheque (post-dated cheques are encouraged). Cash payment is strongly discouraged, and can be made directly to the supervisor or operator only. Please make cheques payable to Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten.

Non sufficient funds (NSF) cheques will be subject to a \$25 fee. Late payments are subject to a \$25.00 late fee, unless alternate arrangements are made with the operator in advance. No refunds will be given for days missed due to illness, inclement weather, vacation, and statutory holidays.

Deposit

All families will be required to pay a deposit of one month of fees for each child enrolled. The deposit is calculated based on the number of scheduled days the child will attend care each month. This deposit will be returned in full upon the child's withdrawal from the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and upon the family's child care account being paid in full. If the Guelph Outdoor Preschool has held your child's spot in program during initial enrolment or during a leave of absence, and you decide not to enroll or return, the one month of fees deposit is non-refundable.

Late Pick-Up

Families who are late to pick up their child(ren) will be billed @ a rate of \$1/minute for the first 10 minutes, and \$3/minute for every minute afterwards

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Illness

In order to attend childcare, children must be free of communicable diseases, and well enough to participate in all areas of the program. Children must not attend childcare if they show symptoms of ill health, including:

- Fever – axilla/armpit temperature of 38°C (100°F) or higher
- Difficulty Breathing – wheezing or persistent cough
- Infected skin or eyes, or an undiagnosed rash
- Severe itching and/or dry skin on the body or scalp if caused by lice or scabies
- Unexplained loose stools/diarrhea
- Nausea and Vomiting

Known or suspected communicable diseases (For more information please see the policy binder in the office, or visit Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's website at <http://www.wdgpulichealth.ca/sites/default/files/wdgpfiles/A+Guide+to+Infectious+Diseases+and+Pregnancy.pdf>).

Should your child develop any of these symptoms while at childcare, you will be notified and asked to come. As directed by the Day Nurseries Act and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, your child will be removed from the program and placed (with a staff member), in our isolation area until he or she can be picked up. Please help us keep all the children healthy by keeping sick children home. Remember, proper handwashing is the best way to control the spread of germs!

Medicine

Medicine prescribed by your physician will be administered to your child if it is given to the teacher in the original container and if you, the parent, sign the necessary medication permission form. Non-prescription medication, including acetaminophen, must be in the original container, labelled with the child's name, the dosage and frequency of administration. You must also complete a Medical Authorization Form. The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten cannot administer a dosage which is higher or more frequent than the dosage recommended by the drug company on the label of the medication. If the dosage information specifies "Under x age : As directed by a physician", a note from your physician indicating child's name, type of medicine, situation for administering, dosage and frequency will be required.

Medical Concerns

The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten reserves the right to refuse admittance to any child with a history of cessation of breathing or any other medical condition for which the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten cannot adequately meet the needs of the child.

Immunization Records

As Required by the Ministry of Health and the Day Nurseries Act, we must have a copy of your child's immunization record prior to admission to the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten.

If you have chosen not to vaccinate your child, you may provide us with a letter of objection written by a parent/guardian or physician to be exempted from this requirement. This letter must be submitted prior to admission to the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten.

Environmental Sensitivities/Allergies

In respect and consideration for those children, parents and staff who have environmental sensitivities and/or serious allergic reactions, we ask that you refrain from wearing any perfumed/scented products at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten. Your understanding is greatly appreciated.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten has developed policies and procedures to ensure a clear co-ordinated response to child protection issues. The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Proclaimed March 31, 2000) states:

1. Responsibility to report a child in need of protection CFSA s.72(1)

If a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the person must promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to Family and Children's Services.

2. Ongoing duty to report CFSA s.72(2)

The duty to report is an ongoing obligation. If a person has made a previous report about a child, and has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, that person must make a further report to Family and Children's Services.

3. Persons must report directly CFSA s72(3)

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection must make the report directly to Family and Children Services. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf. Volunteers or students therefore may be the person reporting the incident.

If staff have "reasonable grounds to suspect" a child is at risk, a report will be made to Family and Children's Services.

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection must make the report directly to Family and Children Services. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf. Volunteers or students therefore may be the person reporting the incident.

If staff have “reasonable grounds to suspect” a child is at risk, a report will be made to Family and Children’s Services.

Parent Intoxication Policy

Should a parent who has been drinking excessively or using intoxicating substances arrive to pick up his or her child, staff are instructed to request that the parent take a cab or call another person to come and pick up him or her and the child. If this practice is not observed by the parent, the Police will be called to assist in ensuring the safety of parent and child.

Hazardous Weather / Emergency Closing Procedures

Although procedures have been developed primarily for closings as a result of hazardous weather conditions, they will also be followed in the event of any other conditions that require the closing or evacuation of the Orchard Park Buisness Centre.

While every effort will be made to conduct thorough consultations before a closing decision is made, where hazardous weather conditions or other emergency circumstances pose an obvious risk to public safety, some consultations provided in this policy may be eliminated in the interest of a speedy and efficient closing decision.

Whenever possible, if a decision is to be made about closing before normal business hours, every effort will be made to render a judgment on the matter by 6:30 a.m. to allow public communication of the decision by 7:00 a.m. If the centre must close during normal business hours, every effort will be made to communicate the decision so as to provide a one hour lead time to ensure the orderly cessation of operations.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Behaviour guidance is an important part of a child’s learning process. Throughout their days at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten, children are developing their social skills and learning to solve problems, regulate their emotions, and gain self-control. Our goal is to help children gain mastery of these skills.

We do this in 4 ways: modelling appropriate behaviours, setting clear, age-appropriate boundaries, creating a well-planned environment and schedule, and using positive discipline methods.

Modelling appropriate behaviours

Staff members will set an example to children in how to deal with daily conflicts by showing children appropriate ways to settle disagreements through verbal negotiations, manage stress using various techniques including breathing, counting, ‘taking a break’, expressing and accepting emotions, showing concern for others and the environment, and treating others with respect.

Clear Boundaries

Children will be taught the ‘rules’ of the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten, which are designed to ensure that all children, staff, equipment and the environment are safe and respected. No staff or child will be permitted to harm themselves, others, or the equipment/environment. These rules will be developmentally appropriate, clearly defined, and consistently enforced by all staff members.

Well-Planned Environment/Schedule

The children’s environment is designed to help decrease conflict by offering adequate space, supervision,

and materials for everyone. When staff see a conflict beginning to arise, they will stay close to the children, offering assistance if needed. A calming atmosphere is created indoors with soft music, soft lighting, divided play areas, and comfortable furnishings. The schedule is designed to reduce outside stressors (such as hunger, boredom, and fatigue) that can encourage behavioural issues.

Discipline

Children who are behaving inappropriately will be disciplined in an age-appropriate, gentle manner. Inappropriate behaviour will be stopped by a staff member. Children will be told what they have done that is inappropriate as well as why. They will then be shown a more appropriate alternative to their action/behaviour. Staff may help other children involved as well, such as suggesting turn-taking, offering roles to make play inclusive, or suggesting alternatives to create fairness for everyone. Staff will praise positive behaviours when they are observed.

Corporal punishment, confinement (locking-up), ridicule, or withholding of basic needs are not acceptable means of discipline and will absolutely not be tolerated. Breach of this policy will result in the immediate dismissal of staff member.

Behavioural/Developmental Challenges

When a child's behaviour or developmental challenges impacts their ability to participate in the routines and expectations of the program, the child's primary teacher will speak with the parents and, with their permission, will make a referral to a community agency such as Trellis, KidsAbility, Wee Talk or Infant and Mental Health for an assessment. There is no cost to families for these services.

The behaviours include and are not exclusive to:

- health
- safety
- mobility
- self-regulation
- and/or ability to function within the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten

Meetings between the parent(s), the supervisor and/or staff and community agency representatives take place while the child is being supported by the community agency. The hope is that with agency help, the program will be able to support the child and continue care at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten. Should the situation continue and the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten is unable to meet the needs of the child and after all avenues of support are exhausted, the supervisor will discuss the concerns with the parents. Should a solution not be found, a two week termination notice will be given. Assistance will be provided to find alternative care for the child.

The Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten reserves the right to ask that a child be withdrawn from the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten's program at any time if it is felt that the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten is not suited to the child's needs. A two week termination notice will be given. Assistance would be provided to aid you in finding a more suitable program in the community for your child.

OTHER POLICIES

Keeping Information Current

In order for staff to provide appropriate care and to be able to reach you in the event of illness or emergency, it is imperative that all family information be kept up to date: e.g. home and work phone numbers, emergency contacts, authorized release persons, etc.

Outdoor Play

All children present at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten will be taken outside for a minimum of 1 hour every morning and afternoon (weather permitting). Children are expected to have appropriate clothing.

Enrolment Package

You must complete all 5 sections in the Enrolment Package prior to your child beginning care at the Guelph Outdoor Preschool and Kindergarten. Please feel free to contact the Supervisor if you have any questions or need assistance completing the enrolment package forms.

Parking

Parking for dropping off and picking up children is available in the main Orchard Park Office Centre parking lot, on the east side of the building.

Please turn off your car's engine while you are dropping off or picking up your child. The exhaust of several cars idling unnecessarily in a limited area can pose serious health hazards to children and adults.

Please do not leave children unattended in the parking area. During peak drop-off and pick-up times, cars are constantly moving in and backing out, creating great potential danger for all children.

DAILY SCHEDULE

8:30-8:45	arrival
8:45-9:15	washroom routine, snack
9:15-9:30	dressing for outdoors, safety check
	morning adventure (forest, meadow, stream, wetlands, orchard, garden)
9:30-11:30	we set out to our destination to explore, play make-believe, do art, make music, dance and sing, read stories, run and jump, collect stuff, learn practical skills, look for wildlife, scoop and pour, build, play games etc.
11:30-12:00	return to centre, share stories, washroom routine
12:00-12:45	lunch
12:45-2:30	nap time, quiet activities for non-nappers
2:30-3:00	washroom routine, snack
	afternoon exploration
3:00-4:30	we set out on another adventure where we continue to have fun and learn—possibly dancing, drumming and singing, to build willow shelter, map with earth, sticks, stones, collect bouquet of wild flowers, make ropes from bark, swing like monkeys from ropes, make nets like spiders, find edible greens, hide like fawns, tend kitchen garden
4:30-5:00	return to centre, free play, departure