

BLC Parent Handbook



Please read through the following information so that you can assist us in making your child's first experience in child care a positive and happy one.

1. School Philosophy
2. Program Statement
3. Our Facility
4. Hours of Operation
5. Late Fee Policy
6. Admission and Withdrawals
7. Parental Involvement
8. Communication with Parents
9. Parent Issues and Concerns
10. Integration Procedure
11. Our Programs
12. Children with Special Needs
13. Daily Schedule
14. Helpful Hints from the Teachers

ANNEX A: 2020 Fees

1. School Philosophy

Our school offers programs where children grow at their own pace in a warm atmosphere of encouragement and trust.

Our programs, from toddler through to preschool, aim to broaden the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of each child.

Our role as teachers is to guide the child and help extend his/her abilities and interests without pressure.

Children learn through play. It is through exploration, play and inquiry that children practise ways of learning and interacting with the world around them.

We wish to **build a strong partnership with families** and encourage family involvement and participation which will strengthen our ability to meet the needs of the children in our care.

The Beacon Learning Centre’s relationship with families is based on mutual trust and respect, and is sensitive to family culture, values, language, and composition.

2. Program Statement

The Beacon Learning Centre (**BLC**) is a non-profit, co-operative child care centre which aims to be as responsive and flexible as possible to meet the needs of children and their families. We recognize that children are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. We strive to provide a positive environment in which they feel secure and at ease, allowing them to grow at their own pace. We believe in supporting parents and their children through the rewards and challenges of the early years. We provide full-time care for children aged eighteen months to four years, and part-time nursery school for children aged thirty months to four years.

We are exploring new ways to increase children’s exposure to nature and the outdoors. Through walks and little adventures in the nearby community our educators provide children with enriching learning opportunities where together we can explore the nature that surrounds us. Our new outdoor classroom further provides children with hands on opportunities to learn about their natural world.

The practices, approaches and goals set out in our program statement guide our programs in a positive way, creating an open forum for new ideas and pedagogical growth. Our program statement is read by all employees, students and volunteers before commencing work or interacting with children and at any time the program statement is modified. Teachers discuss and review items in our program statement at their monthly program meetings, and as a team at our monthly staff meetings. Any items discussed are documented in our staff meeting agenda by the director. The approaches mentioned above, as well as ongoing communication, is how **BLC** documents and reviews the impact our program statement has on children and their families.

Goals and Approaches

The following table outlines the goals and approaches, along with concrete examples, that the educators use to guide their programs at BLC (CCEYA General Regulation 137/15 section (46) (a-k)).

Goal	Approach	Examples
(a) promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan snack and lunch menus reflective of Canada’s Food Guide requirements. - Use meal times to build positive social interactions. - Provide rest and quiet time as appropriate for each child with ongoing consultation with parents. - Provide children with daily physical activity indoors and outdoors. - Plan for ways to support smooth transitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Indoors: music/movement, yoga, safe indoor exercise equipment (steps, rocking horse, soft climber).</i> - <i>Outdoors: unstructured play in yard with equipment that supports gross motor development such as hula-hoops, balls, bikes, swings, climber.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vigilant monitoring and compliance with allergy and anaphylaxis policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sing songs to encourage self-help skills; use tools to develop self-regulation skills, such as breathing.</i>
(b) support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Model positive language that builds authentic relationships and connections with children, parents and coworkers. - Recognize and express the critical role that families play in their child’s development. - Create an open environment that allows families to be an equal partner in the care of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Monthly staff meetings to discuss important issues about programs.</i> - <i>“I understand you are feeling frustrated”, “I care about you and would like to help”</i> - <i>Use Storypark to facilitate consistent communication.</i>
(c) encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use positive language that builds authentic relationships and connections with the children to create a sense of belonging. - Encourage positive verbal and non-verbal communication. - Value children’s first language and culture; foster second language acquisition. - Recognize and support children’s varied self-regulation abilities in all domains (biological, emotional, communicative, cognitive and social). - Offer challenging environments, indoors and outdoors, that invite the children to explore, take risks, test their abilities and support self-regulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Help children listen to and express themselves to one another.</i> - <i>Smile, make eye-contact, and interact at the child’s level.</i> - <i>Offer invitations to the families to share their cultural traditions, provide children with books about family dynamics, cultures, etc.</i> - <i>Provide balance beams, group games, building blocks, open ended art activities, exploration and sensory bins.</i>
(d) foster the children’s exploration, play and inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design environments that are appropriate for the developmental needs of the children. - Plan programs that have an emphasis on the interests and abilities of the children that will allow them to engage in active, creative, and meaningful experiences. - Offer a variety of interesting objects from nature as well as other open-ended materials to manipulate, investigate and explore with their senses. - Increase outdoor time and exposure to nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Provide limited interruptions and transitions to maintain a sense of calm and simplicity for toddlers.</i> - <i>Provide older children large blocks of time to engage in sustained, complex play and inquiry.</i> - <i>Engage in group projects (carve pumpkins, garden, snow forts).</i> - <i>Explore the textures of bark, sunflowers, and other “loose parts”.</i>
(e) provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer open-ended materials as well as guided experiences that spark curiosity, invite investigation and provide challenges. - Ensure the space and experiences help children develop an increasing awareness and understanding of key literacy/numeracy concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Participate as a co-learner, co-investigator, and co-planner.</i> - <i>Listen to children’s questions and theories then step back to let them find answers and solve problems through trial and error.</i>

(f) plan for/create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate opportunities and time to practice self-help and self-care skills based on each child's capabilities. - Reflect on documentation of the children's thinking, learning and competences in order to provide meaningful learning experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Model hand washing; give extra time for dressing for outdoor play.</i> - <i>Give children the opportunity to share their knowledge with other children.</i> - <i>Review activities and experiences together as a teaching team.</i>
(g) incorporate indoor/outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day. Give consideration to the individual needs of the children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide rest and quiet time as appropriate for each child with ongoing consultation with parents. - Increase children's physical activity indoors and outdoors by providing a balance between free play and guided play - Make an effort to provide relaxed and flexible scheduling. - Plan for individual children's needs. - Increase time in the outdoors and increase exposure to nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Waker's program available if needed.</i> - <i>Provide open ended equipment, materials and planned activities/ games, music and movement indoors and outdoors.</i> - <i>Nature walks</i> - <i>Quiet spaces available throughout the day such as a tent, couch or quiet listening corner.</i>
(h) foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize the critical role that families play in their child's development. - Create an open and transparent environment that allows families to be partner in their child's learning. - Document children's words, thinking, learning and competences in a visible way for children and families to view frequently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Use Storypark and documentation boards to communicate the learning taking place and/or issues in regards to development.</i> - <i>Binder for each child where art work, observations and reflective pieces are stored for children and families to view throughout their time at BLC.</i>
(i) involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan activities to involve children in their local communities. - Promote community events for families and educators. - Incorporate and acknowledge local culture and language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Use Storypark to inform staff and parents about community events.</i> - <i>Visits from local fire station, librarians, musicians etc.</i> - <i>Winter & Summer Fun Days, Music nights, annual auction, and other social/fundraising events.</i>
(j) support staff or others who interact with the children in relation to continuous professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial reimbursement for attending external professional learning when funding is available. - Encourage self-reflection and meaningful discussions by collaborating and learning with other educators. - Seek opportunities to self-reflect, collaborate and learn with other educators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>CPL opportunities posted in Staff Room.</i> - <i>Share inspiring/educational videos, articles and other resources.</i> - <i>Make time at monthly staff meetings to discuss observations or challenges. Find solutions together.</i>

(k) document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document children’s words, thinking and learning in a way that demonstrates our approaches listed above. - Reflect and share any feedback from families, parents, children and educators. - Revise program statement based on above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Use daily log book and/or personal self-reflection journal to record the impact of our goals and approaches.</i>
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The Learning Environment

BLC programs are based on developmentally appropriate practices that provide opportunities for active engagement with other children and teachers in a caring environment. Our mission is to stimulate a love of learning and to lay the foundations required for the future acquisition of skills. At the **BLC** we recognize the importance of children learning through play. Our emergent curriculum allows us to observe and then build on the interests of the children, providing opportunities to extend their learning both inside and outside the classroom. This learning is documented and displayed in the classrooms through learning stories, inquiry/exploration displays, documentation boards, and other unique reflective pieces developed by our teachers. As of September 2018 the **BLC** is using Storypark as a way of emailing group and individual learning observations to parents. Read more about Storypark under “Communication with Parents”.

Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) is a framework for Ontario’s early childhood settings that describes how children learn and develop. We use this as a guide to further understand and enhance children’s emotional, social, physical and cognitive development throughout the year. This complements, rather than replaces, specific curricular and pedagogical approaches as it helps teachers prepare early learners for school - with a focus on kindergarten school readiness in the preschool classes.

The full ELECT document can be viewed through the following link:

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/topics/earlychildhood/early_learning_for_every_child_today.pdf

We create an inclusive environment designed to ensure meaningful participation for every child. *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014 (HDLH)* is a pedagogical resource about learning through relationships for those who work with young children and their families. We have integrated this resource into our everyday programming and centre as a whole as it includes goals for children and expectations for programs. It is organized around four foundations for learning - belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. These foundations interconnect with the six guiding principles of ELECT, strengthening the quality and inclusivity of **BLC**’s programs.

The full HDLH document can be viewed through the following link:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf>

Our Staff

We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of teachers, each with a unique combination of education and experience. Some are Registered Early Childhood Educators, trained to guide the social and academic development of young children, while others have Bachelor's degrees coupled with years of experience in the child care sector. Some of our teachers are continuing their studies by taking ECE courses part-time. We are fortunate to have some teachers that have more than twenty five years' experience working with young children as well as the fresh minds of those who are recent ECE graduates. What all of our teachers share in common is a love for the children in their care.

As lifelong learners, the teachers at **BLC** engage in continuous professional learning by exploring new ideas and researching pedagogical methods. Teachers share and discuss current practices that are taking place within the community and around the world through educational websites, videos, articles, textbooks, books and other resources. We also brainstorm with other centres, educators and professionals in Ottawa and the surrounding area through a web-based collaborative tool, professional workshops and other community practices. By frequently reviewing teaching practices, individually and as a team, we strive to achieve the best outcomes for children, families, and ourselves. **BLC** provides ongoing opportunities for educators to engage in critical reflection and discussion with others about pedagogy and practice to support continuous professional learning and growth.

Partnership with Families and the Community

BLC holds a strong partnership with its local community partners. A few highlights include an annual visit from our local fire station, visits from local librarians and musicians. Our Summer/Winter Fun Days and Annual Dinner & Auction attract current families and friends, alumni and support from our Beacon Hill-Cyrville Councillor, Tim Tierney. As a co-operative school, parents and families help with fundraising, maintenance and other important duties that help preserve **BLC's** quality programs and facility. We welcome new ways to connect our children and their families to their community.

We also work closely with Children's Integration and Support Service (CISS), Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre (OCTC) and other organizations to facilitate the integration of children into our early childhood programs.

Positive Guidance Approach

Our teachers use positive language and are responsive to the needs of the children at all times. They also encourage the children to use positive language when interacting with each other. The **BLC** supports a positive child guidance approach as a way to guide children's behaviour, enable them to cope with social challenges and develop problem solving and complex thinking skills. Ontario's *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014* document has been a valuable tool for creating and implementing our approach.

Part of our approach is to support positive interactions with children, parents and staff at the **BLC**. Children learn many of their behaviours through what we say and how we act which is why it is important to model prosocial behaviour by being kind, compassionate and helpful.

Our positive child guidance approach also holds an emphasis on self-regulation as it is an important component of children's development. Self-regulation governs how a child is able to cope with stressors and then recover. Children who are learning to self-regulate in many ways can manage their own behaviour by using descriptive language to express themselves and find healthy ways to deal with various emotions (i.e. using phrases such as "I feel sad/excited", taking a deep breath to become or stay calm). We support the physical and mental health of each child by encouraging and providing opportunities for expression.

We support an environment that reduces stressors and encourages children to make their own choices. Problem solving alternatives such as setting realistic expectations, using positive reinforcement and discussing recurring or difficult behaviours with parents is our way of providing further guidance for children. Ultimately, our child guidance approach nurtures each child's social, emotional, and cognitive development and gives them a sense of belonging.

Prohibited Practices

It is the responsibility of each staff, student, volunteer and parent to act in a positive and respectful way with children. The following are prohibited practices at the **BLC**, as stated in CCEYA General Regulation 137/15 section (48) (a-e):

- Corporal punishment of the child (i.e. spanking, hitting, shaking etc.)
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- Locking the exits of the premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding;
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

The above prohibited practices apply to interactions between staff, students, volunteers and parents as well. Disrespectful or aggressive behaviour (such as yelling, hitting etc.) towards staff, students, volunteers or parents shall not be permitted by anyone on the premises of the **BLC**. Everyone including staff, students, volunteers and parents are expected to comply with this policy and the requirements of the CCEYA.

Rest/Nap Time

In accordance with the Ministry of Education, a child in a licensed toddler or preschool group is permitted to sleep, rest or engage in quiet activities based on the child's needs. Children may have a sleep, rest or quiet time not exceeding two hours per day. Rest time is between 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. The children sleep on stackable cots. Each child's cot has his/her name on it and will only be used by him/her. **BLC** supplies a cot sheet and blanket but you may choose to send in a special blanket and cuddly toy from home. Teachers play soft music to help children relax their bodies. Children are monitored closely by the staff at all times while in the rest room. If a child wakes up early, he/she may join the wakers' program, playing quietly while classmates are still resting.

Nutrition and birthday treats

All snacks and meals are prepared on-site by our cook. We serve healthy, well-balanced meals and provide an alternative for vegetarian children and those with food allergies. Snack always includes fruit or vegetables. Children are offered milk or water to drink. Weekly menus are posted in the front entrance. Our kitchen is regularly inspected by the Ottawa Health Department.

When it is your child's birthday you may wish to send in a treat for his/her class. Please speak to one of your child's teachers before doing so. It is important to read the fine print on the list of ingredients as it is imperative to ensure that the treat does not contain any traces of peanuts/nuts and does not have a 'may contain' warning. If you make the treat yourself, please do not buy ingredients from Bulk Barn, due to the possibility of cross contamination. Your cooperation is appreciated as we work diligently to maintain a nut-free environment.

Allergies and medication

Individual plans for children with life-threatening allergies are posted upon completion by parents. These sheets include a photograph of the child, the allergen(s) to avoid, the management plan and emergency procedure. All centre staff, supply teachers and volunteers provide name, date and signatures indicating they have read and understood these identification sheets.

BLC staff may administer doctor-prescribed medications, creams and lotions accompanied with an authorization form signed by parents. Non-prescription medications (e.g. Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.) will not be administered to children by **BLC** staff. However, in the case of a fever of 39.4C (103F) or more, and with parent approval (sign-off form in registration class) the child will be weighed and the appropriate dosage of Tylenol will be administered. For the safety of the children, all medications are stored out of children's reach, in a locked box.

Exclusion Due to Sickness Policy

The Beacon Learning Centre will follow the guidelines set forth by the City of Ottawa Health Department with respect to personal health care practices and procedures for children.

All children present at the centre should be well enough to participate fully in the daily program, including outdoor activities. When a child becomes ill at the centre, the parent will be notified and asked to pick up the child immediately. The emergency contact person will be called if the parent cannot be notified. As we are obligated to act in the best interests of the health and safety of **all** children (and staff) in our child care centre, a child who exhibits one or more of the following symptoms will not be allowed to attend or remain at the centre:

- fever of 38°C (100°F) or over;
- vomiting;
- diarrhea;
- undiagnosed rash;
- symptoms of contagious illness;
- severe runny nose, cough, or cold;
- excessive lethargy;
- eye infections.

A child may return to the centre when:

- he/she has been clear of all symptoms of fever, diarrhea or vomiting for a **minimum of 24 hours** (when gastro outbreaks occurs this period becomes 48 hours);
- symptoms of severe cold are absent;
- there may be an exclusion period for some illnesses, such as Conjunctivitis (pink eye), Measles, Mumps, Pertussis (whooping cough), Rubella (German Measles), as required by the City of Ottawa Public Health branch;
- children with head lice must be treated with a head lice product before returning to **BLC**;
- you may be asked to provide a medical certificate of health from a doctor before returning to the child care program when:
 - an undiagnosed rash is present;
 - there is a possible eye infection;
 - there is a possibility of a contagious illness.

*Please note that final determination as to whether the child's condition merits exclusion is in the sole discretion of the **BLC** Director in consultation with staff and that the criteria stated are guidelines for that discretion only.*

Safety/Security

While we do not take the children on field trips, we are increasing their connections with nature and the outdoors in all of our programs. This is inspired by Forest Schools around the world where a play-based, child-led, and inquiry-based outdoor learning pedagogy is practiced. As such, some of the programs have begun taking the children on nature walks outside the **BLC** yard. When this occurs, the teachers complete a risk assessment prior to the children going to that specific area to ensure it is safe. Our outdoor learning policy, which can be found on our website, outlines other steps we take in order to ensure the safety of all the children at **BLC**.

We also take the children off the premises when there is in an emergency situation, for example if we need to evacuate. **BLC** conducts monthly fire drills and two lockdown drills per year to ensure the staff and children are well prepared for an emergency. **BLC** has emergency management policies and procedures in place which the staff reviews annually. This policy, along with all others can be found on our website. We also have a 'telephone tree' which is used to communicate with parents in an emergency, for example, in the case of a power outage. Parents are welcome to call the office to discuss any concerns.

Parents and guardians must accompany their children directly into the appropriate programs and notify the teachers on duty of your child's arrival. At pick up time please remember to let a teacher know you are leaving with your child. Unless otherwise advised, your child **will not be released to any person other than those specified on the registration forms**. Persons unknown to the teachers should be prepared to show photo ID. Your child's safety is our number one priority.

The **BLC** is equipped with a security alarm system that notifies the staff whenever someone enters or exits the building. A unique code is given to parent(s) before your child's start date that allows entry from 7:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. only. This code is not to be given out or shared with anyone, including the children, as they could enter the building during outdoor play without their teacher's knowledge. The doorbell is for authorized guests and volunteers.

We pride ourselves in accepting Early Childhood Education students and co-op students from nearby high schools so they may learn the responsibilities and enjoyment of working with young children. We will post the student's names and information along with a picture so you are aware of who is in your child's class. We are also happy to accept the help of volunteers from the community once they have provided background checks and if their help is needed. All employees, volunteers and students (over 18 years of age) are required to provide an original criminal reference check called a Police Vulnerable Sector Check (PVSC) before working with children at **BLC**. **Students and volunteers will be supervised at all times by a regular staff member and are never left alone with children.**

Respecting Diversity

At **BLC** we are sensitive to family culture, values, language, and composition. We recognize, respect and value the uniqueness of each child and their families. Our programs promote acceptance and foster an understanding of differing beliefs, traditions and abilities.

Nurture and Touch

Nurturing touch is necessary for every child's emotional growth. Children feel loved, accepted and supported when cared for and touched by nurturing adults and peers. This may include hugging, holding on lap, rocking, carrying, rubbing or patting backs, cuddling and hand-holding. We are sensitive to children's responses and requests for physical interaction, and will model appropriate nurturing touches.

Physical touch for safety and hygiene is always done in a gentle and respectful manner. This may include face and hand washing, assisting with toileting, examining rashes and unusual marks, nose blowing, and assisting with necessary clothing changes. First aid is administered as gently as possible and always accompanied by verbal explanation and appropriate comfort. Any form of touch only occurs with the child's permission; they always have the right to decline these touches. Please feel free to discuss or ask questions regarding anything mentioned here.

3. Our Facility

The Beacon Learning Centre provides children with excellent facilities; both indoors and out, including a large, fully fenced outdoor playground that exceeds current safety specifications. Our safe and supervised playground takes learning outside. Our nature walks together with our new outdoor classroom expose children in our care to the vast learning opportunities that the nature provides. Our new facility was built in 2011. The indoor space at the Beacon Learning Centre features large, bright rooms for children to learn in a creative environment. We have lots of toys and books which we rotate regularly to maintain and build upon the children's interests. The **BLC** is licensed on an annual basis by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

4. Hours of Operation

The **BLC** is open Monday to Friday from **7:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.** We are closed on all statutory holidays including New Year's Day, Good Friday (Easter), Canada Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day. We are also closed on Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Thanksgiving Monday as well as the week between Christmas and New Year. We are closed on the Friday before Labour Day to allow the teachers to prepare for the new school year. We remain open on Remembrance Day. Notifications for holiday closures will be posted.

5. Late Fee Policy

BLC closes at **5:45 p.m.** Parents arriving between **5:50 and 6:00 p.m. will pay a late fee of \$10 per child.** After **6:00 p.m. the fee is \$1 per minute.** For example, a parent arriving at 6:15 p.m. will be required to pay \$25. Parents should always phone the centre if they are running late. Otherwise, you will receive a phone call from us. If you cannot be reached your designated emergency contact(s) will be phoned to pick up your child.

6. Admission and Withdrawals

Before registering your child at the Beacon Learning Centre you are encouraged to schedule a visit to learn about our programs and to see our facility. All children in full day programs must first be registered on the City of Ottawa’s Centralized Waiting List (<https://onehsn.com/ottawa>). Once registered on the CWL you will receive a call when a spot becomes available for your child. You are also welcome to call and check on your child’s place on the waiting list. Most of our spaces become available in the summer or September. Nursery School registration starts in March. You do not need to register with the centralized waiting list for this program.

(See ANNEX A for current fees) All our registration forms are available on our website and must be accompanied by a \$50 non-refundable registration fee and post-dated cheques for the monthly fees. One half of the first month’s fee is also non-refundable. If you are eligible for a childcare subsidy, no registration fee is to be paid and you will be advised by the City of Ottawa of your contribution amount (if any). This amount is to be paid to the City of Ottawa, which, in turn, pays the Beacon Learning Centre the monthly fee for your child’s care. Fees for each program are posted on our website and may be subject to increase in January of each year. You must also complete the Health Department’s immunization form and provide an up-to-date copy of your child’s immunization record.

Any parent wishing to withdraw their child must give the Director **at least one month’s notice in writing in advance of the commencement of the month in which the withdrawal is to be made.** For example, if a child is to be withdrawn any point in time during the month of November, the Director must be notified in writing on or before October 1st. No fees will be returned for partial month attendance.

7. Parental Involvement

The **BLC** is governed by its children’s parents, whose views are represented by a Board of Directors composed entirely of parents. As **BLC** parents you are active members of a co-operative school. One parent from each family is required to serve either on the Board of Directors or a committee. For example, you could be our

Board treasurer or a member of the toy cleaning committee. A full description of committees can be found in the registration package for each program.

8. Communication with Parents

This parent handbook and all other policies are on our website www.beaconlearningcentre.com. The results and comments from our annual Ministry Review are also accessible for parents to view in the office.

We communicate with parents mainly by email and through Storypark. Teachers send parents regular updates and photos about the activities that the children are enjoying in their programs. Parents sign a permission form regarding privacy before being invited onto Storypark which states that they will only share photos with family members. At no time may a story, photo, or conversation on Storypark be shared on Facebook or any other social media site. Other emails will also be sent out to remind parents of upcoming fundraising events, registration information and special programs. One email per family should be provided. In certain cases we can add another email address to our listing.

BLC has a ‘telephone tree’ which is used to communicate with parents in an emergency, for example, in the case of a power outage. Parents are welcome to call or email the office to discuss any concerns at any time.

If your child had difficulty separating in the morning, we welcome your calls to find out if he/she has settled. You may also speak with the teachers at drop off and pick up time provided that they are still able to monitor the room. If you have any serious concerns about your child’s development we would be happy to schedule an appointment to meet with you.

Each program has a communication board outside their classroom that includes their daily schedule, upcoming events, and unique displays about programming (i.e. web of interests, printed Storypark updates, highlights of the week or documentation boards). In the classrooms parents may also see documentation boards with the various activities the children are engaged in and the learning that comes from these activities. Parents are encouraged to check these regularly.

Parents are also encouraged to communicate regularly with their child’s teachers on any matters pertaining to their child’s development, health or progress. For example, stating that your child had a rough night sleep or that they are working on a certain skill at home can be very helpful. Each program has developed different methods to communicate with parents in regards to their child’s day. The toddler teachers use charts to record what each child ate, how much they slept and their toileting. The junior preschool teachers use a checklist that indicates whether the child ate, how long they slept and their toileting. The middle and senior preschool teachers tend to use word of mouth to communicate with parents as children are becoming more independent in their eating, sleeping and toileting at this age.

9. Parent Issues and Concerns Policy

The Beacon Learning Centre acknowledges that parents and caregivers have a right to raise issues and concerns they may have and to have them addressed appropriately. This policy is in accordance with regulations as stated in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA), Section 45.1.

We have a number of ways to keep parents/caregivers informed. These include:

- Open door policy
- Regular program updates and learning stories through Storypark
- Parent Handbook & Program Statement
- Annual General Meeting (typically held in June)
- School website www.beaconlearningcentre.com

The steps for parents to follow when they have an issue or concern to bring forward to the licensee:

- 1) The main line of communication for a parent/caregiver is through their child's teachers. We hope and expect that the teachers will be able to respond to the majority of concerns without parents/caregivers feeling the need to take them further.
- 2) If the concern requires significant time to resolve, the parent/caregiver should arrange a mutually convenient time to meet with the teacher.
- 3) If the concern is not resolved, or more assistance is needed, the director will be informed. A meeting may be arranged with the parent, director and any other relevant parties.
- 4) Should parents/caregivers feel an issue or concern is still unresolved they should contact the director in writing. Parents/caregivers may choose to raise concerns with the director first.
- 5) If the parent/caregiver remains dissatisfied after discussion with the director, he/she should write formally to the board Chair. The Chair will discuss the concerns with the director, the parent/caregiver and other relevant parties and provide a response in writing.
- 6) We hope that very few parental complaints reach this stage, through good communication. However, should a parent/caregiver wish to take formal action, they need to write again to the Chair of the board, requesting that a formal complaint be taken to the rest of the board. The parent/caregiver may be invited to attend a meeting with the board to discuss the formal complaint, if necessary. After fully considering the complaint, the board will then write to the parent/caregiver to inform them of their decision.

Steps for licensee and its employees in responding to an issue or concern brought forward by a parent:

- 1) Listen and discuss the concern in a professional and respectable manner.
- 2) Record concerns, when deemed necessary, in the day book and how it was resolved.
- 3) If the concern is not resolved, or more assistance is needed, the director will be informed. In the case of the director, the board Chair will be informed.
- 4) The director or board Chair will discuss the concern with the parent in person or in writing, depending on the nature of the concern.

5) Any meetings or discussions in regards to issues and concerns will be followed up in writing, if the director or Chair deem necessary.

Timeframe: We aim to respond quickly to all expressions of concern. The director or board would aim to acknowledge a written concern within 2 working days. Depending on the nature of the concern, a response may take longer.

Confidentiality: Concerns raised by parents/caregivers will be treated in confidence. If the concern involves the actions of a member of the teaching or support staff it will need to be discussed with them in the interests of fairness. Anonymous complaints cannot be handled through this policy.

Monitoring and Review

In partnership with the teachers, the director and board will monitor the process of dealing with concerns and make modifications to this policy when necessary.

10.1 Integration Procedure

A few days before your child's start date you will receive a call from your child's teacher. She will have read your child's registration forms and may have some questions about your child. Feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns at this time.

In order to facilitate integration, we phase in each child gradually. For our full day programs, on the first two days your child may be dropped off in the morning and should be picked up after lunch (at noon). On the third day he/she should be picked up at 2:30 (after rest time). On the fourth day you may pick up your child at your regular time. If your child experiences a lot of difficulty adjusting, this integration period may be lengthened. You are welcome to stay in the program until your child feels comfortable. Always say goodbye to your child before leaving.

In our Nursery School program we start off with smaller groups so your child may have one integration morning before attending their regular mornings. As with our full day programs, you are welcome to stay until your child feels comfortable.

When a child "moves up" to another program, it is not required for them to have integration days. Instead they will have short visits to their new class a week before their move. Children are moved up based upon age, readiness and available space.

10.2 Our Programs

Toddlers

Toddler children range between eighteen and thirty months. The ratio is one teacher for every five children. Currently **BLC** is licensed for twenty toddlers.

“Moving up”: Toddlers are moved up to junior preschool when a space becomes available. They are moved up according to age. If two children share a birthday the teachers will determine which child is most ready to be moved. If there is no room in preschool when your child turns thirty months they may remain in the toddler program until a space becomes available.

Junior Preschool

Junior preschool children range from thirty months to three years in September. The ratio is one teacher for every eight children. There are sixteen children in this group.

“Moving up”: Children are moved up to middle or senior preschool based upon age, readiness and available space.

Middle Preschool

Middle preschool children range from three to three and one half years in September. The ratio is one teacher for every eight children. There are eight children in this group. They are with the nursery school class in the mornings and join the senior preschool class for rest time and the remainder of the day.

Senior Preschool

Senior Preschool children range from three and one half to four years in September. The ratio is one teacher for every eight children. There can be up to twenty-four children in this group.

Nursery School

Nursery School children range from thirty months to four years. The ratio is one teacher for every eight children. Nursery school operates from 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

11. Children with Special Needs

The Beacon Learning Centre has accommodated children with special needs for many years. We work together with Children’s Integration and Support Service to facilitate the integration of children into our early childhood programs. We also work with Ottawa Children’s Treatment Centre (OCTC), a community organization which provides specialized care for children and youth with multiple physical, developmental, and associated behavioural needs. Through a collaborative effort, parent(s), CISS, OCTC, the child’s teachers and any other needed service, build an individualized support plan that express goals and a learning path for

the child. We do our best to provide suitable care for children who may need extra program support. However, if the teachers feel that they are unable to provide the best care for a child, we will notify the parents, discuss other options and support in any way we can.

12. Daily Schedule

Full Day Programs

Children in our full day programs may be dropped off at any time after 7:30 a.m. and picked up before 5:45 p.m. If your child is going to be absent or very late (e.g. after 10 a.m.) please call the office. Each day starts with free play in the child's program room. A variety of play centres will be set up to engage the children. These may include a sand table, a play kitchen, a book corner, a water table, a painting easel, a play dough table, a train track or building blocks on the rug etc. Our toys are rotated regularly and changed based on the children's interest.

During the morning the children will have snack, circle time and outside play. Circle time takes place either before or after outside play and includes a story, songs, finger plays and games. As stated in section 47(1)(c) of the CCEYA General Regulation 137/15, each child who is in our care for six hours or more in a day spends time outdoors for at least two hours each day, weather permitting, unless a physician or parent of the child advises otherwise in writing.

Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., and after bathroom and diapering routines, the children have a nap or quiet time. After rest time the children may have another story time or circle time, have snack and then play outside until it is time to go home. In the winter, when it is too cold or dark in the afternoons, the children play inside.

Afternoon snack is around 3:00 p.m.

Nursery School Program

The Nursery School program starts at 8:30 a.m. If you arrive early please stay with your child in the front entrance or the cubby area while the teachers are setting up the room. An optional healthy snack is provided at about 9:00 a.m. As in the full day programs a variety of play centres are set up around the nursery school room. The children are free to move from centre to centre depending on their interest. The children will have circle time before or after outside play (weather permitting). Circle time includes a story, songs, finger plays and games. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m. Children are picked up at 12:00 p.m.

13. Helpful Hints from the Teaching Staff

To help us in the smooth operation of our programs, we would appreciate your help with the following:

- Please put names on all clothing and footwear.
- Children in our full day programs need at least two full changes of seasonal clothing to be left in their classroom. Nursery school children will need one change of clothing which should be kept in a clear, labeled ziplock bag in their cubbies.
- Shoes or slippers must be worn at school. It is a good idea to leave a pair of shoes (labeled of course!) at the **BLC**.
- Washable play clothes are best for school.
- Children should be dressed appropriately for outside play.
- Each child has a labeled art work bin close to his/her cubby. These bins should be emptied regularly.
- You may find information about fundraising events and Scholastic book order flyers in your child's bin or cubby.

ANNEX A: Fees

Registration fee: \$50

2021 Fees Chart

Program	Monthly fees	Daily rate
Toddler	\$1420	\$66.05
Preschool	\$1130	\$52.56
Nursery School	\$490	