



**“Make the child a world citizen at the beginning of his  
conscious life to carry humanity forward.”**

Dr. Maria Montessori

# Parent Handbook

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# Precious Seeds Montessori House

## Montessori & Forest Program

We wish to extend a warm welcome to all the new and returning children and families of Precious Seeds Montessori. We hope from the moment you enter the school and see the children, the friendliness of the parents, and the passion of the staff, you will be infused with the spirit and excitement of our school. We are already anticipating a successful learning year.

Please take a few minutes to read the handbook as we hope it will answer many of the questions you might have about the school.

### **History**

We, at Precious Seeds Montessori House, are honoured to continue the legacy of Brilliant Star Montessori Preschool, founded in 2002. This legacy is much more than offering a preschool program, but to strive for excellence to serve the South Surrey community by educating young children and their families about how to seek the treasures within people and promote unity and peace.

### **Holistic Education**

At Precious Seeds Montessori we offer a holistic early childhood education program. Holistic education programs guide each person to find meaning and purpose through community connections, natural world connections, and humanitarian virtues. The aim of this type of education calls forth an intrinsic reverence for life and a passion for learning.

### **Our Mission and Goals**

Our mission is to emphasize both character development and intellectual development. The goals are to establish a safe, warm and caring environment within which students learn positive and appropriate ways to handle situations; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility, courtesy and self-confidence; and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful learning. To ensure the educational leadership needed to realize these goals, the school is dedicated to the pedagogical approach of Dr. Maria Montessori and the Early Childhood Education Program.

### **Our Guiding Principles**

#### ***Children Come First***

Developing a child-centred environment that fosters understanding and cherishes the uniqueness of each individual child and promotes his or her learning by remembering that:

- All children can learn;
- Children learn in different ways and at different rates;
- Learning needs to be relevant and responsive to individual needs and interests;
- Children learn best when they feel physically and emotionally safe;
- Learning should build upon children's successes;
- Education should be holistic, developing the interdependent facets of the child's mind, body and soul;

- Children's self-esteem and happiness are key to successful learning.

## **Spiritual Education**

### ***Virtues***

Universally understood virtues are the building blocks of children's characters. All members of the Precious Seeds community are responsible for modeling and mirroring these by:

- Demonstrating personal integrity in both action and words;
- Respecting each individual for the unique talents and gifts that he or she brings to our community;
- Living and learning together joyfully;
- Striving to include the widest range of people in the school community, regardless of culture, socio-economic status or ability.

### ***Beliefs***

- The children will be introduced to a developmentally appropriate concept of our Creator. We believe children instinctively know the truth about God and children can come to know about God's invisible qualities through creation and caring relationships.
- Children in our program will hear: God created our world, God loves and knows everyone, we can talk to God, and we find joy in caring for the world and others.
- We acknowledge and respect the diversity of belief systems of families in our program and welcome everyone. We invite you to discuss what your child hears at school in relation to your own belief system in an effort to cultivate tolerance. Our program is not intended to convert anyone and we do not study religious curriculum.

## **What is "Montessori"?**

The unique educational philosophy set out over 100 years ago by Dr. Maria Montessori aims to develop the child's innate desire to learn. The child's mind is extremely absorbent and his curiosity is at its peak during these early years.

Our program at Precious Seeds is for children in the important early formative years of 2 ½ to six years. Montessori observed that the child passes through definite periods of sensitivity for acquiring knowledge and skills. The Montessori curriculum integrates these sensitive periods with the individual interests of the child. The classroom at Precious Seeds is organized into the following areas:

**Practical Life** - enables the child to develop:

- coordination
- independence
- fine motor control
- concentration

**Sensorial** - enables the child to:

- develop a sense of order.
- discriminate and refine differences in all five senses.
- prepare for language and math.

**Language** - the children practice:

- letter sounds

- reading
- handwriting
- grammar
- vocabulary

**Math** - we focus on:

- number concepts
- operations
- time and money

### **Other areas of curriculum:**

**Culture** –This is an important part of our curriculum and includes: geography, Science and nature, and cultural awareness.

**Music** - Our Music program is directed by a music teacher. In addition, music is also an integral part of the classroom. Circle time is often used for songs.

**Yoga** – Yoga is guided by a professional yoga instructor.

**Art and crafts** - Arts and crafts materials are always available in the classroom.

### **Field Trips**

The field trip plans will be directed by themes/seasons and parent participation required.

### **A Three-Year Age Span**

Precious Seeds classes are organized to encompass a three year age span, which allows younger student to experience the daily stimulation of older role models, who in turn blossom in the responsibilities of leadership. Students not only learn “with” each other, but “from” each other.

Some parents worry that having younger children in the same class as older ones will leave one group or the other short changed. They fear that the younger children will absorb the teachers’ time and attention, or that the importance of covering the “kindergarten” curriculum for the five-year-olds will prevent teachers from giving the three and four-year-olds the emotional support and stimulation that they need. Both concerns are understandable, and easily addressed.

Working in one class for two or three years allows students to develop a strong sense of community with their classmates and teachers. The age range also allows

accelerated learners the stimulation of intellectual peers. At each level within Precious Seeds, the curriculum and methods are logical and consistent extensions of what has come before.

### **Meeting the Needs of So Many Different Children**

The role of the teachers at Precious Seeds is that of facilitators and guides. The teacher is usually not the center of attention and will not normally spend much time working with the whole class at once. Her role centers on reviewing the progress and needs of each individual child on a daily basis, and preparing and organizing appropriate learning materials to meet the needs and interests of each child in the class.

Precious Seeds emphasizes hands-on discovery-based learning. Our students are challenged to compete against themselves, rather than each other.

### **The Classroom Materials - From the Concrete to the Abstract**

The basis of our approach is the simple observation that children learn most effectively through direct experience and the process of investigation and discovery. In her studies of children's learning, Dr. Maria Montessori noted that most children do not learn by memorizing what they hear from their teachers or read in a text, but rather from concrete experience and direct interaction with the environment. Asking a child to sit back and watch us perform a process or experiment is like asking a one-year-old not to put everything in his mouth. Children need to manipulate and explore everything that catches their interest.

This led Dr. Montessori to emphasize the overriding importance of concrete learning apparatus and to the development of materials for mathematics, sensory development, language, science, history and geography. The learning materials are not the method itself, but rather tools that we use to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative and simple, each carefully designed to appeal to children at a given level of development.

Each material isolates and teaches one concept or is used to present one skill at a time, as the child is ready. Dr. Montessori carefully analyzed the skills and concepts involved in each subject and noted the sequence in which children most easily master them.

To facilitate the prepared order of the environment, the teacher arranges the materials on the shelf following their sequence in the curriculum. The materials are displayed on low open shelves that are easily accessible to even the youngest children. They are arranged to provide maximum appeal without clutter. Each has a specific place on the shelves, arranged from the upper-left-hand corner in sequence to the lower right. Materials are always arranged in sequence, from the simplest to the most complex, and from the most concrete to those that are the most abstract.

**The Montessori materials are designed to appeal to children. If your child brings home some small, interesting piece of equipment, please have the child return it to the school. Much of the material is imported and takes weeks to replace.**

### **Parent Participation**

A parent conference will be scheduled during the year. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request.

Precious Seeds will be holding periodic Parent Education Evenings that are aimed at helping you gain an appreciation of the activities in the classroom.

From time to time parents are invited into the class to assist with special projects. Parents are encouraged to present special activities or share a special talent with the children.

It is the hope of the school to build a strong partnership between parents and the staff.

### **Observing Your Child**

Parents are invited to observe the children at work. Contact your child's teacher to let them know when you would like to visit. In order to limit the number of adults in the classroom at the same time, and maintain the classroom as a "children's environment", we need to schedule observations so that they do not overlap or so that there are not too many observations scheduled within a short period of time.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during this period.

### **The Essence of the Forest Element**

The Forest Element connects children, 3-6 years old, with the natural world. Our facilitators are passionate about children and the natural world. We believe in engaging children's imagination, modeling a sense of awe for the natural world, and using experience as the basis for learning. Simple activities linked with unstructured play can teach many valuable skills like cooperation, communication, and leadership.

Every day, facilitators do a safety check of the site and ensure that the children have all that they need in order to enjoy their time outdoors. We believe that taking part in an outdoor learning environment will help future generations feel more comfortable in and connected to the natural world.

The program features:

- Environmental sustainability
- Child-led learning
- Experiential learning
- Holistic education
- Virtues Education
- Compassionate communication

### **A Day in the Life of an Outdoor Learner**

1. Welcome circle, Welcome song, talk about the plans for the day
2. Site assessment, play, facilitator facilitated activity, game (eg. "Mud Kitchen")
3. Wash hands, snack, story (in Park forest)
4. Exploratory activity based on the interests of the group and whether we have something to continue exploring from the previous week (eg. nature hunt, painting with natural materials)
5. Ending activities

**The Forest Element "curriculum" includes:**

**Math**

- Recognizing patterns in the environment (leaves, spider webs...)
- Measuring natural materials using other natural materials
- Building items and measuring before you build (with materials on trail)
- Counting natural items

### **Music**

- Creating musical instruments with natural materials
- Setting up items that will move in the breeze
- Listening to the sounds in your environment
- Singing and dancing together

### **Art**

- Making land art with leaves, rocks, sticks
- Weaving with sticks
- Painting with natural materials
- Pounding flowers and leaves onto fabric
- Experimenting with natural dyes
- Creating “costumes” with natural materials

### **Literacy**

- Creating a story about your place
- Finding letter shapes in natural materials
- Writing messages with natural materials.
- Local/First Nations stories about plants and animals
- Songs, rhymes and picture books about local plants and animals
- Circle stories with the group
- Using loose natural parts to tell an oral story
- Learning animal languages
- Sharing your personal stories about natural experiences
- Narration in play

### **Science**

- Creating homes for real and imaginary animals
- Caring for animals and learning about their life cycles (Farm Portion)
- Understanding seasonal patterns

### **Sensory Play and Experiences**

- Mud kitchen
- Playing with water on a tarp
- Sensory games such as "Sardines"

### **Large Motor Skills**

- Throwing leaves and water into the air from a tarp
- Digging
- Walking on different surfaces, i.e. rock path, mud, grass
- Balancing on logs and rocks

### **Fine Motor Skills**

- Whittling sticks with potato peelers
- Weaving with leaves and other fallen materials

### **Social**

- Discussing what to do
- Talking about challenging situations and our comfort levels ("weapon" play)
- Making rules and setting limits as a group
- Problem-solving and working together on projects
- Hunting and gathering activities – searching for things together
- Integrating others into free-form, imaginary play

### **Reflection and Integration**

- Looking for animal tracks and signs (on trail)
- Being deeply in an environment and getting to know its patterns
- Journaling or reflective art
- Sit spots for reflection

### **Farm Curriculum**

We will visit Hazelmere Pumpkin Patch Farm once a month, most months of the school year, to help with farm-related activities, such as planting, feeding animals, collecting eggs, and simple animal husbandry tasks. We will notify you of Farm Weeks on the School Calendar.

### **Forest Element at Carlson Creek Location**

The forest element of the program is offered daily at the Carlson Creek location in the backyard. If there are extreme weather conditions, i.e. severe cold or wind, we are planning that the children can make use of the indoor Montessori classroom.

The program will run daily from 12:00pm – 2:00pm.

### Forest Element at Redwood Park

We will meet for the Redwood Park forest element at the playground. After our opening circle, we will walk to our site in Redwood Park. Out of respect for the protected areas of the park, we will remain on-trail.

Our program runs almost exclusively outdoors and uses nature as a venue for exploratory play, no matter what the weather might be. We prepare children for these conditions and ensure that the children's safety is our number one priority. If there are extreme weather conditions, i.e. severe cold or wind, the children can join the indoor Montessori program at the Carlson Creek location. We will contact you with concerns about weather conditions.

The forest element runs in Redwood Park on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2pm-4pm.

### **Redwood Park Forest Friends require:**

- A child-sized backpack (waterproof recommended) should contain:
  - a. A healthy, high-energy snack in a reusable container, and water bottle.
  - b. An emergency blanket.
  - c. Extra socks, gloves, and hat.
  - d. Bread bags for wet feet (if feet get wet we can put on dry socks, put feet in bags, and back in wet boots).
  - e. A full change of clothing (i.e., pants, shirts, underwear, socks) and plastic bag for soiled clothes. \*This is in addition to spare clothing kept in classroom.
  - f. Optional: reusable hand warmers, whistle

### **Warmth and Comfort for Outdoors**

When you are outdoors, comfort is **very important**. Good clothing makes the difference between a child who is engaged with the environment and a child who is uncomfortable and unhappy. When it is rainy, please send your child in layers.

The children must come with gear that is appropriate to the weather that day. Children who are not adequately dressed will not be able to attend that day.

Layers: We recommend wearing layers of clothing so children can make adjustments as needed according to changes in weather/microclimate and activity levels.

Footwear: Boots or sturdy waterproof shoes with good grips on the bottom. Even when it is not raining, the children may play in water or mud. Footwear should be closed-toed (no sandals).

### **When it is rainy, we recommend:**

- Inner layer of fleece (or polypropylene) or natural fabrics such as wool or silk. The fabric should wick moisture away from the skin and provide a warm, breathable layer.
- Middle layer of insulation made of wool or fleece.
- Outer shell of waterproof, windproof clothing, including a rain jacket and rain pants.
- For the feet, we recommend neoprene Bogs or Kamik boots.

- Warm, waterproof hat that covers the ears.

**When it is cold, please add:**

- Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens that slip on and off easily.
- Long underwear.
- An extra pair of warm gloves and warm socks in your child's bag
- Reusable hand warmers

**When it is warm, please wear:**

- A long-sleeved shirt (we recommend light cotton, silk or hemp).
- Durable pants.
- A sun hat.
- Sun protection

**Freedom and Discipline**

As a school that emphasizes both character development and intellectual development, Precious Seeds expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, and teachers.

The goals are to establish a safe, warm and caring environment within which students learn positive and appropriate ways to handle situations; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful learning.

Our discipline approach is framed by the work of Dr. Gordon Neufeld and attachment theory. We aim to avoid behaviour issues from arising by following these strategies:

1. We use structure and ritual to impose order on behaviour. Ex. Our daily program has structure and routine built into it.
2. We accept responsibility for what is the best interest of the child and for keeping them out of trouble. Ex. We use previous experience to guide and avoid behaviour issues.
3. We always treat the child as if they want to be good for us. The desire to be good is a function of attachment.
4. We bridge all problem behaviour and resulting discipline. We emphasize that the relationship is maintained despite the behaviour. Ex. "I still care about you. What we need to talk about is how you hit your friend."
5. We attempt to connect before we direct. Ex. We make eye contact, smile, and/or nod.
6. We defuse counter will by hiding our agendas and by drawing attention to "meaningless" choices. Ex. To accomplish my agenda of putting a child to bed, I would give the choice of sleeping with teddy or puppy.
7. We script the behaviour of the children. Ex. "This is the way we hug our friend gently."
8. We don't overwork the incident and focus on maintaining the relationship.
9. We infuse FUN into the activity we wish to happen. Ex. "Let's pretend we are collecting treasures while we clean up these blocks."
10. We walk confrontations with futility all the way to sadness. We are there for comfort. Ex. While offering a hug after saying "no" to having another cookie I would say, "I see it

makes you sad that you can't have another cookie, but we need to practice fairness and give one to each child. Can I give you a hug?"

11. We solicit good intentions to inculcate virtues, prime a sense of responsibility, and sow the seeds of self-control. Ex. "I see you were considerate when you tucked your shoes in so no one would trip on them."

Further, this approach is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at Precious Seeds. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is purposely broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the students whose actions led to the damage.

Children are aware that hitting, pushing and other similar physical acts are not acceptable expressions of emotions. Children often display such behaviour out of frustration, nevertheless, the behaviour is not acceptable. When such acts occur, we help the child identify and come to terms with their own emotions that led them to display such behaviour; we encourage them to take reparative action towards the other child.

It is our desire to never have to dismiss a child from our program however, if the actions of a child are debilitating to the classroom environment and risk the health and safety of the child and or classmates we will dismiss the child. Please note that this will not occur until we have exhausted all reasonable resources to provide the proper environment for the child.

### **Trial Period**

We have a one-month trial period prior to final enrollment. During this time the child is observed and assessed to ensure that he/she can adjust to the new environment and make new friends. For the well-being of the child in the event your child is not adjusting well to the new environment, we retain the right to terminate the enrollment. Parents also have the right to terminate enrollment during this trial period.

### **The School's Hours of Operation**

Morning program 9am-1:05pm.

Extended Morning program 9am-2pm.

Afternoon program 2pm-4pm.

Full day program 8am-4pm.

8:00 - 9:00 Full day students arrive – activity time or breakfast (parents provide breakfast)

9:00 - 11:15 Morning indoor lessons & activities

11:15 - 11:30 Morning class circle

11:30 - 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 2:00pm Outside active play time, forest element in backyard

2:00-4:00pm Afternoon activities

- Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons are Redwood Forest Program days for a group of 12 children (maximum) with 2 teachers; full day friends NOT enrolled in Redwood Forest Program these afternoons will remain at school with a teacher and engage in group activities.
- Monday and Thursday afternoons are Montessori program with either yoga or music instruction.

Please contact us if you need schedule clarifications.

### **Health Policy**

#### 1. Health and Sickness

Child Care policies regarding health are based on the following criteria:

- Preventative public health practices,
- The comfort and safety of the sick child.
- The staff's ability to accommodate or look after a sick child.
- The protection of the other children, staff, students, and parents from communicable diseases.

It is recommended that all children have their regular immunizations up to date before they attend the centre. Check with your local health nurse. Please attach a photocopy of your child's immunization record to your registration form.

As the weather gets cooler and we move indoors, so do germs. Children need reminders to decrease the risk of colds and flu in your house and at the center by:

- Washing hands often.
- Covering coughs and sneezes.
- Not sharing hand and face towels.
- Keeping hands away from nose and mouth.
- Not sharing food, drink, sucker etc. with someone who is sick.

#### 2. Exclusion Due to Illness

- If your child has any communicable/infectious disease, please make other child care arrangements, and contact the centre within 24 hours of diagnosis.
- Should your child become ill while at school, you will be notified immediately and are expected to arrange for the child to be picked up promptly. Your child should be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- If the parent(s) cannot be located, staff will contact the Alternate Person listed on the Application Form.

To help limit the spread of germs, please keep your child at home if she or he is feverish, coughing a lot, has thick yellow or green discharge from the nose, or is otherwise obviously unwell.

Specifically, please keep your child at home if they aren't well enough to take part in the regular program or is suffering from one or more of the following symptoms:

- \* complains of unexplained or undiagnosed pain
- \* an acute cold with fever, runny nose and eyes, coughing
- \* sore throat or trouble swallowing
- \* headache or stiff neck
- \* severe itching of body and scalp
- \* unexplained diarrhea or loose stool combined with nausea, vomiting or cramps
- \* difficulty breathing, wheezing, persistent cough
- \* fever (100F/38.3C or higher), general listlessness
- \* infected skin or eyes, or an undiagnosed rash
- \* Diarrhea, or nausea, or vomiting or abdominal cramps. These symptoms may indicate a bacterial or viral (gastrointestinal) infection, which is very easily passed from one child to another. The child should be kept home until all symptoms have stopped. (24 hours away from school)
- \* any known or suspected communicable disease.

**Should your child be diagnosed with a serious or contagious illness, please notify the school promptly.**

\*\*\*If symptoms are the result of an allergy not infection, you should notify the staff and the child may attend regularly. A letter from the family doctor may be requested at this time.\*\*\*

### 3. Return to School after An Illness

- a. 24 hours after receiving an antibiotic
- b. When the child is no longer contagious.
- c. If a child is well enough to attend school, we feel they are well enough to participate in outdoor activities provided they are adequately dressed.

### 4. Administration of Medication

- All medications administered to a child in a licensed care facility must either be prescribed by a medical practitioner or provided by the parent for that child. The staff shall ensure that the medication is given to the child in the amount and at the time specified in writing by the parent. The teachers will provide you with an "Administration of Medication Form." The child's parent or guardian must sign these instructions. Staff will complete Caregiver Administration Record.
- Medication will be kept in locked cupboard out of children's reach.

### 5. Washroom

- Children can go to the washroom at any time. We do encourage them to go after each meal and quiet time, and before going outside.
- Children are encouraged to learn how to wipe themselves and to change their own clothes. Parents can help in this area by sending their children in loose-fitting clothes. This helps the child to be more independent and self-reliant.
- Children who have "accidents" will be changed with the assistance of the staff. Wet clothing will be bagged and sent home for laundering. Please ensure that your child has a full change of clothing (i.e., pants, shirts, underwear, socks) at school.

- Note: If your child has a certain bathroom routine, please let us know.
- Children of all ages are encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet and after playing outside.

### **Nutrition**

**Meals** (full day and morning half day students): To help meet the varying dietary needs, we ask families to provide the main courses for lunch (and breakfast if necessary), for example a breakfast sandwich or oatmeal for breakfast and stir-fry or a sandwich for lunch. Also, please send water in a water bottle as a beverage.

**Sharing Snacks** (all students): To promote healthy food choices, we will wash and cut fruit and vegetables and crackers, provided by families, for the children's snacks daily. A self-serve water jug is available anytime.

- We encourage healthy eating habits as outlined by Canada's Food Guide available at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>. We ask that you do not send sugary snacks.
- ALL students are asked to provide 1 piece of fruit, vegetable, or box of crackers every other day which will be shared by the children.
- If you wish to send a warm lunch for your child, we suggest sending it in a thermos as we have limited time to warm food for each child during lunch time.
- If you are unsure if a food is appropriate, please feel free to check with the teachers. Thank you for your cooperation!

### **Allergies?**

Please let us know if your child suffers from food sensitivities/allergies. In cases of severe allergies, all parents may be notified, and foods that cause life-threatening allergic reactions will be prohibited at the center.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

A child's birthday is a time of celebration and we welcome the opportunity to celebrate this occasion with your child in the classroom. The celebration in the class revolves around the child's life and special events that have occurred. Parents are encouraged to create a timeline of the child's life using one picture for each year of the child's life and anecdotes from family members. The child is welcome to bring in a simple nutritious special snack such as fruit, vegetables or dessert to share with the class. This occasion is a celebration and is not meant to be a birthday party, therefore we ask that no presents, gift bags, etc., be distributed at this time.

***If you are having a birthday party and you wish to invite students in your child's class, please request an updated class list. Please EMAIL the birthday party details to the parents. We will not distribute paper invitations since they can get misplaced in little hands and children can be very sensitive and do not always understand why they have not received an invitation. Thank you for your cooperation.***

### **Releasing Students**

When anyone other than the parent or guardian who normally takes your child home, arrives to pick up your child from class, the following procedure must be followed:

- The teacher will check the student's Application Form to check the "Persons Authorized to Pick up My Child" section.
- If the teacher has not met the individual previously, he or she may be asked to produce ID to verify identity.
- If the person is not on the list of "Persons Authorized to Pick up My Child" section, the teacher must be given a signed letter (not email) from the parent stating who will be picking up your child and the dates. It is not sufficient to say "the child's grandfather", we need to know the person's full name for proper identification.
- If it is an emergency and it is not possible to get a written note to us in time, we need a phone call authorizing us to release your child, and again, we need the full name of the person we will be releasing your child to.
- If we have not received authorization of the individual picking up and they are not listed on your Application Form, we will try to contact you. If you cannot be reached, we will not release your child until we hear from you.
- If anyone who is a "Person Not Permitted Access to my Child" on your child's Application Form comes to pick up, we will not release your child to that individual.
- In cases of divided families and custody issues, a copy of all pertinent court orders pertaining to your child must be in your child's file at school.
- Children will not be released to anyone who appears intoxicated.

### **Toys**

Personal toys are best kept at home. It is difficult for small children to keep track of their possessions. We suggest that you have a basket in the car where the child leaves the toys until the school is over.

Books, items from nature, or items the child made, that might be of interest to **all the children**, are welcome for show-and-tell.

### **Parking**

Please respect our neighbors and use the designated parking spots or driveway. You may also park along the road.

### **Street Safety**

Please do not leave your child unattended in the parking lot or in front of the school, and hold hands until you hand your child over into teacher's care.

***Please make sure the entrance gates are always closed as you enter and exit the school.***

### **Drop-off and Pick-up**

We would like to ask parents to leave the school premises promptly as they pick-up and drop-off their child, in order to have safe parking available for all the parents and not create traffic congestion for the neighbours. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

### **Clothing**

Play clothes are encouraged- simple, washable, sturdy and easy to manage. Children are involved in a variety of activities, and do occasionally spill paint, glue etc. Most days we will be using the playground or going for walks around the neighbourhood. Each child should come to school prepared to go outside.

### **Emergency Procedures**

THIS PLAN IS PRACTICED, REFINED, AND REHEARSED WITH THE CHILDREN THROUGH DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND DRILLS. THE LOCATION OF THE DESIGNATED SAFETY SPOTS WILL BE REINFORCED.

Staff are trained in the following emergency procedures. Staff are knowledgeable about location and use of emergency supplies (first aid kit, fire extinguisher, evacuation route and emergency kit).

At the first sign of an emergency, children are taught to stop whatever they are doing and calmly, quietly and quickly, without regard for collecting personal items, take action:

- **EARTHQUAKE:** DUCK, COVER, HOLD. Move away from windows/glass and take cover under a sturdy table or stand in a corner or doorway, protecting and covering head and face and listening for instructions from the teacher, emergency staff, or responsible adult. After shaking stops, exit the building and go to the Designated Safety Spot.
- **FIRE** or other danger: move to the appropriate exit and leave the building, proceeding immediately to the Designated Safety Spot; sit down and wait, no matter how long it takes for help and instruction from the teacher or emergency officials or other emergency staff.

Our **Designated Safety Spot** will be by the peach tree in the south west corner of the backyard. There are two ways to get there, each of which, depending on the emergency, maybe more or less appropriate.

1. Go out the cubby room door, through the backyard, across the lawn and stand by the peach tree.
2. Go out the main house door, through gate, across the lawn and stand by the peach tree.

**Off-site Designated Safety Spot:** *If our premises are unsafe, we will walk to Ocean Village Farm Market, 1421 King George Blvd.*

The first teacher is responsible to immediately gather the children and proceed to the Designated Meeting Spot. The second teacher will collect the first aid kit, the attendance roll, and phone and ensure all children are following the first teacher and meet the group at the Designated Meeting Spot. Attendance will be taken immediately with whatever necessary actions are appropriate for safety and support of all the children.

In full cooperation with emergency workers and strategies, every effort will be made to keep your children safe. Families will be contacted as quickly as possible and as permitted.

***Out of Town Contact:*** Kath Wills 1-250-675-5452. In the event of an emergency where local calls do not connect, we will communicate with you through this third party.

### **Screen Time Policy**

We do not include screen time activities in our program.

### **Active Play Policy**

All students participate in active play for 60 minutes or more daily. Active Play is defined as any activity that gets the child's body moving and increases breathing and heart rate. Here are some active play activities in our program: music & movement program, yoga program, dancing, walks in the local park, forest element activities, simple group games, running, jumping, skipping, climbing, digging, sledding, and riding.

### **What Should We Bring?**

Your child will need to bring, on the first day:

1. **INSIDE SHOES:** Please send inside shoes, preferably not slippers, which he or she can put on independently, they will be referred to as "inside shoes." The reason all students need "inside shoes" is a safety precaution. There may be water or other objects on the floor that could cause a fall or injury. Also in case we need to evacuate the building for an emergency. Flip-flops or sandals with buckles may be awkward for the child to be comfortable in when sitting on the floor.
2. **CHANGE OF CLOTHES:** A complete change of clothing in a large Ziploc bag, clearly marked on the outside with your child's name. It saves us a great deal of time if each item is labelled. Also, please label boots and coats.
3. **PICTURE:** We would like a 4x6 picture of your child for the coatroom. The returning children do not need to bring a new picture. It does not matter if it is a bit bigger or smaller as long as it is a clear picture. Please have the pictures ready for first day.
4. **BLANKET:** 1 Child-sized blanket for quiet time. (Full day students only.)
5. **EARTHQUAKE KIT:** In a large see-through Ziploc bag, please provide the following by the first day of class:
  - 12 protein bars and four 500ml water bottles
  - emergency out of town contact
  - family picture
  - a small stuffy or toy that would comfort your child
  - emergency blanket – foil one (available in camping section of Canadian Tire)

### **The First Days of Class**

Initially, it can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year, and even after holidays.

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. Be reassuring as you talk with your child about her new school. We have found that a short and positive good-bye is easiest for the child. The prolonged or lingering good-bye often makes the separation more difficult. It is very important to reassure him about where you will be during the day, and by what time you will pick him up. Have faith in your child and in your teacher! Your child will have a good day, even if you leave him in tears at the door. The teachers are professionally trained to introduce your child to this new experience; she will be comforted and directed to an activity that helps make her feel part of the group.

If your child has not had much experience away from you, separation may take time. Be patient and you will soon both feel comfortable.

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Finally, please feel free to phone or email us if you have any questions or concerns. Please keep in mind that our first priority during school time is the children. We will return your call as soon as possible. You may also email the teachers if the matter is not urgent.

***“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies but the period from birth to the age of six... for that is the time when intelligence itself, her greatest implement, is being formed...”***

Dr. Maria Montessori  
(1870- 1952)