



BLC Parent Handbook – Revised January 2026

For over 50 years, Beacon Learning Centre has been a cornerstone of our community, and we are proud of the legacy we have built together. Each member of our team is deeply committed to providing high-quality early childhood education and care for our neighbours and for the next generation. Every day, we strive to ensure that families experience the warm, nurturing environment that exists within our centre and the strong sense of community and belonging we foster. We are grateful for the trust you place in us to provide a safe, joyful, and enriching environment where your children can learn, grow, and thrive.

Please read through the following information so that we can work together to make your child's first experience in child care a positive and happy one. This is an exciting milestone in your child's early years, and we are honoured to be part of this important next step in their growth, learning, and sense of belonging. Welcome to BLC!

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

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.

At BLC, spending time outdoors is a natural part of our daily rhythm. Whenever possible, children are outside exploring, moving, and learning - both in our outdoor spaces and throughout the surrounding community. Through neighbourhood walks and small adventures, educators support children in building connections with the natural world and the people around them. Our outdoor classroom extends this learning, offering hands-on opportunities for curiosity, exploration, and meaningful engagement with both nature and community.

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. - Vigilant monitoring and compliance with allergy and anaphylaxis policies 	<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> - <i>Sing songs to encourage self-help skills; use tools to develop</i>



		<i>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>



<p>(f) plan for/create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported</p>	<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"> - Model hand washing; give extra time for dressing for outdoor play. - Give children the opportunity to share their knowledge with other children. - Review activities and experiences together as a teaching team.
<p>(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</p>	<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"> - Waker's program available if needed. - Provide open ended equipment, materials and planned activities/ games, music and movement indoors and outdoors. - Nature walks - Quiet spaces available throughout the day such as a tent, couch or quiet listening corner.
<p>(h) foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children</p>	<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"> - Use Storypark and documentation boards to communicate the learning taking place and/or issues in regards to development. - Binder for each child where art work, observations and reflective pieces are stored for children and families to view throughout their time at BLC.
<p>(i) involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff</p>	<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"> - Use Storypark to inform staff and parents about community events. - Visits from local fire station, librarians, musicians etc. - Winter & Summer Fun Days, Music nights, annual auction, and other social/fundraising events.
<p>(j) support staff or others who interact with the children in relation to continuous professional learning</p>	<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"> - CPL opportunities posted in Staff Room. - Share inspiring/educational videos, articles and other resources. - Make time at monthly staff meetings to discuss observations or challenges. Find solutions together.



(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"> - Use daily log book and/or personal self-reflection journal to record the impact of our goals and approaches.
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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 **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. We use 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 readiness in the preschool classes.

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.

At Beacon Learning Centre, our educators are deeply committed to learning and to their work with children and families. They engage in ongoing professional learning by exploring new ideas, sharing current practices, and reflecting together as a team. This learning happens through professional resources, workshops, and collaboration with other educators and early learning professionals in our community. Through regular reflection - both individually and as a team - educators continue to strengthen the quality of care and learning experiences offered at BLC. All educators maintain up-to-date First Aid and CPR certification, as well as current Vulnerable Sector Police Record Checks, helping to ensure a safe, caring, and professional environment for every child.

Partnership with Families and the Community

Beacon Learning Centre is deeply rooted in its community, and those connections are an important part of daily life at BLC. Throughout the year, children enjoy meaningful experiences with community partners such as our local fire station, librarians, and musicians. Our Fall and Winter Fun Days and Annual Auction bring together current families, alumni, friends of BLC, and community supporters, including our Beacon Hill–Cyrville Councillor, Tim Tierney.

Our relationship with the community is a two-way street. Through neighbourhood walks, our children bring energy, curiosity, and plenty of smiling faces into the community around them. We work with local schools to support co-op placements and volunteer hours, and each year our families come together to support a food drive for the Gloucester Emergency Food Cupboard. We've also recently added a Little Free Library, creating another way for children and families to share, connect, and feel part of something bigger.

As a co-operative school, families play an active role in supporting fundraising, maintenance, and other shared responsibilities that help us care for our space and sustain the quality of our programs. We're always excited to find new, meaningful ways to connect our children and families with the community we're proud to be part of.

Positive Guidance Approach

Our educators use positive, respectful language and respond thoughtfully to children's needs throughout the day. They also model and encourage kind, positive communication, helping children build respectful and caring relationships with one another. **Beacon Learning Centre** 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 **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 **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 **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 Ministry of Education requirements, children in licensed toddler and preschool programs are supported to sleep, rest, or engage in quiet activities based on their individual needs. Rest time takes place between **12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.**, and children may sleep, rest, or participate in quiet activities for up to two hours each day.

During rest time, children sleep on individual, stackable cots. Each cot is labelled with the child's name and is used only by that child. BLC provides a cot sheet and blanket; however, families are welcome to send a special blanket or cuddly toy from home to support comfort and routine. Educators play soft music to help children relax and transition into rest time, and children are closely supervised by staff at all times.

Where staffing ratios and space allow, children who wake early may be supported in a small early-wakers group with quiet activities. Availability of this option depends on daily program capacity and Ministry-mandated ratios and may vary throughout the year.

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.

Formerly, parents were invited to bring a birthday treat to share with classmates on their child's birthday. Due to severe allergies, **BLC** does not currently allow any outside food. Instead, our cook prepares healthy homemade cupcakes when a child has a birthday. They are apple, pumpkin or banana-based and are allergen-free. If a child has special dietary or feeding needs, parents are asked to discuss them with the Director. Any approved outside food will be managed in accordance with the Centre's Anaphylaxis Policy to ensure the safety of all children.

Any food and/or beverage that is provided by the parent of a child must:

- Meet the nutritional recommendations of the Canada Food Guide;
- Be in containers that are labelled with the child's name
- Respect Beacon Learning Centre's allergy awareness procedures, including prohibited foods
- Be stored according to proper food storage procedures;
- Have written instruction provided by the parent for all children younger than 44 months of age.

Allergies and medication

Individual plans for children with life-threatening allergies are developed in consultation with families and the Director and are posted once completed. 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. Prescription/over-the-counter skin products (with a DIN) that need to be administered for acute or symptomatic treatment will only be administered to a child where a parent of the child has given written authorization to do so by completing the child care centre's Authorization for Medication Administration. All doctor-prescribed medications must be provided in their original packaging and clearly labeled with the prescription label.

Non-prescription medications (e.g. Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.) will not be administered to children by **BLC** staff.

For the safety of the children, all medications are stored out of children's reach, in a locked box.

Emergency allergy medication (e.g., oral allergy medications, inhalers, and epinephrine auto-injectors) may be kept unlocked or carried by a child, with parental authorization, to ensure quick access when needed.

These medications must be provided in their original packaging, be clearly labeled with the prescription label, and have an accompanying Authorization for Medication Administration form. Where required, an Individualized Medical Plan, developed in collaboration with the Director, must also be in place.

BLC's Anaphylaxis Policy is intended to help meet the needs and save the lives of children with severe allergies and provide relevant and important information on anaphylaxis to parents, staff, students, volunteers and visitors at the child care centre. As part of our Anaphylaxis Policy all staff, students and volunteers will know a child's allergies, signs and symptoms, and treatment to occur and will review all updates to individualized plans and emergency procedures.

Strategies for Reducing the Risk of Accidental Exposure to Allergens

- All children in the centre will be instructed to wash their hands before and after eating, not to share food or utensils, and to place food on a napkin rather than on the table.
- All parents/guardians receive information regarding our allergy policy in their child's registration package. They must sign to indicate that they have read and agree to follow this policy. In the event that we have a child in our care with a life-threatening allergy to another food or material, the Director will take measures to provide a safe environment for that child.
- Due to severe allergies, **BLC** does not allow any outside food. If a child has special dietary or feeding requirements, parents should discuss these needs with the Director. Any approved outside food must comply with the Centre's Anaphylaxis Policy to ensure the safety of all children. (Must meet the nutritional recommendations of the Canada Food Guide; Be in containers that are labelled with the child's name; respect Beacon Learning Centre's allergy awareness procedures including prohibited foods; be stored according to proper food storage procedures; have written instruction provided by the parent for all children younger than 44 months of age.)

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 37.8°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 outbreak 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 **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 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. **In the event of an emergency or unplanned early closure, BLC will issue notifications to families through Lillio.** These notifications are typically delivered via SMS through our enrollment platform. Please be advised that, depending on the circumstances, the message may originate from an unfamiliar phone number.

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 students' 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.**

Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy

In 2024 the Ministry of Education put into place a Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy and Procedure for all childcare centres in Ontario. The full policy can be viewed below.

Purpose

This policy and the procedures within help support the safe arrival and dismissal of children receiving care.

This policy will provide staff, students and volunteers with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for ensuring the safe arrival and dismissal of children receiving care, including what steps are to be taken when a child does not arrive at the child care centre as expected, as well as steps to follow to ensure the safe dismissal of children.

This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under Ontario Regulation 137/15 for policies and procedures regarding the safe arrival and dismissal of children in care.

General



- Beacon Learning Centre will ensure that any child receiving child care at the child care centre is only released to the child's parent/guardian or an individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization the child care centre may release the child to.
- Where a child does not arrive in care as expected or is not picked up as expected, staff must follow the safe arrival and dismissal procedures set out below.
- Children may only be released to an adult who, according to the child's emergency contact card, is either the first or second primary contact, or a contact listed as "to whom the child may be released". In the case of the latter, whomever is releasing the child must verify the contact by referencing their ID against the emergency contact card.

Procedures

Accepting a child into care

1. When accepting a child into care at the time of drop-off, program staff in the room must:
 - greet the parent/guardian and child.
 - Where the parent/guardian has indicated that someone other than the child's parent/guardians will be picking up, the staff must confirm that the person is listed on the emergency contact card or where the individual is not listed, ask the parent/guardian to provide authorization for pick-up in writing (e.g., note or email).
 - document the change in pick-up procedure in the daily written record.
 - sign the child in on the classroom attendance record.

Where a child has not arrived in care as expected

1. Where a child does not arrive at the child care centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or advised the closing staff at pick-up), the staff in the classroom must:
 - inform the Director who must commence contacting the child's parent/guardian no later than 10:00 am. The Director will call the parent/guardian. If there is no answer the Director will leave a voicemail asking the parent/guardian to call the centre.
 - The Director will then call the other contacts listed on the emergency contact card until they are able to make contact with an adult to confirm the absence and the whereabouts of the child.
 - If the Director is not able to reach any of the above to confirm the child's absence from care they will call Ottawa Police at 613-236-1222, extension 7300.
2. Once the child's absence has been confirmed, program staff shall document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence in the daily written record.

Releasing a child from care

1. The staff who is supervising the child at the time of pick-up shall only release the child to the child's parent/guardian or individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization that the child care may release the child to. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual),



- o confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
- o where the above is not possible, ask the parent/guardian/authorized individual for photo identification and confirm the individual's information against the parent/guardian/authorized individual's name on the child's file or written authorization.

Where a child has not been picked up as expected (before centre closes)

1. Where a parent/guardian has previously communicated with the staff a specific time or timeframe that their child is to be picked up from care and the child has not been picked up by 5:50 pm, the Director shall call the parent/guardian's cellphone and advise that the child is still in care and has not been picked up.
 - o Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian, the Director will then call the other contacts listed on the emergency contact card until they are able to make contact with an adult to confirm when the child will be picked up.
 - o Where the individual picking up the child is an authorized individual and their contact information is available, the staff shall proceed with contacting the individual to confirm pick-up as per the parent/guardian's instructions or leave a voice message to contact the centre.
 - o Where the staff has not heard back from the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was to pick up the child the staff shall refer to procedures under "where a child has not been picked up and program is closed."

Where a child has not been picked up and the centre is closed

1. Where a parent/guardian or authorized individual who was supposed to pick up a child from care and has not arrived by 6:00 pm, staff shall ensure that the child is given a snack and activity, while they await their pick-up.
2. The staff shall stay with the child and call the parent/guardian to advise that the child is still in care and inquire their pick-up time. In the case where the person picking up the child is an authorized individual, the staff shall contact the parent/guardian first and then proceed to contact the authorized individual responsible for pick-up if unable to reach the parent/guardian].
3. If the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was responsible for picking up the child, the staff shall proceed to contact authorized individuals listed on the child's file.
4. Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file (e.g., the emergency contacts) by 6:30 pm the staff shall proceed with contacting the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) at [\(613\) 747-7800](tel:6137477800). Staff shall follow the CAS's direction with respect to next steps.

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 an important part of every child's emotional growth and well-being. Children feel loved, accepted, and supported when cared for by nurturing adults and peers. This may include appropriate forms of physical contact such as hugging, holding on a lap, rocking, carrying, gently rubbing or patting backs, cuddling, and hand-holding. Educators are attentive and responsive to each child's cues, comfort level, and requests for physical interaction, and model appropriate, respectful nurturing touch at all times.

Physical touch related to safety, care, and hygiene is always carried out in a gentle, respectful, and professional manner. This may include face and hand washing, assisting with toileting, examining rashes or unusual marks, nose blowing, assisting with necessary clothing changes, and administering first aid. First aid is provided as gently as possible and is always accompanied by clear verbal explanations and appropriate comfort.

All physical contact occurs with the child's consent, and children are always supported in expressing their preferences. A child has the right to decline physical contact at any time, and their wishes will be respected. Families are welcome to discuss this approach or ask questions at any time.

3. Our Facility

Beacon Learning Centre offers children rich, thoughtfully designed environments that support learning, exploration, and well-being - both indoors and outdoors. Our large, fully fenced outdoor playground exceeds current safety standards and is actively supervised, allowing children to extend their learning beyond the classroom each day.

Outdoor play is an integral part of our program. Through daily outdoor time, nature walks, and our outdoor classroom, children are encouraged to explore, observe, and engage with the natural world, fostering curiosity, resilience, and a sense of connection to their environment. Our outdoor classroom, added in 2019, provides meaningful play value and supports a wide range of hands-on learning experiences.

Through ongoing fundraising and community support, we are able to continue investing in both our outdoor and indoor learning environments, enhancing materials, spaces, and programming to support meaningful learning experiences for all children in our care.

Indoors, Beacon Learning Centre features bright, welcoming classrooms designed to inspire creativity and engagement. Learning materials, toys, and books are carefully selected and rotated regularly to reflect children's evolving interests and to support inquiry-based learning.

Our purpose-built facility opened in 2011 and continues to be maintained to high standards of safety and quality. Beacon Learning Centre is licensed annually by the Ontario Ministry of Education, ensuring ongoing compliance with all provincial regulations and best practices in early learning and care.

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



Family Day, 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 the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation and Remembrance Day. Notifications for holiday closures will be posted.

5. Fees

Thanks to the support of the City of Ottawa and the Ministry of Education, **BLC** has enrolled in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELLC) system. This enabled **BLC** to reduce fees for parents starting in April 2022.

2025 Fees Chart – Effective January 1st, 2025

Program	Base Fees (Monthly fees + registration fees)	Daily rate	Non-Base Fees (late fees)
Toddler and Preschool	Calculated by number of instruction days in the month plus \$25 registration fee.	\$22.00	\$10**

Fee Schedule and Payment Methods

- Payment Schedule: Fees are collected monthly, on the first Monday of each month.
- Fee Calculation: Fees are calculated at a rate of \$22 per day, multiplied by the number of program days in that month.
- Payment Method: Payments are withdrawn automatically using Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD).

Fee Refunds & Credits

Regular monthly fees are charged to hold your child's spot; therefore, no rebates or fee reductions will be provided for unused days of care, including illness, vacation, statutory holidays or short-term absence.

In the event of a program closure due to weather or unforeseen circumstances, credits or refunds may be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Director, and in alignment with municipal/funding guidelines.

For families receiving a subsidy: the standard "absent days" allowable under municipal subsidy policy apply; fees may still be owed beyond the allowable absence days.

Refunds or credits of fees will be provided in circumstances where the City reduces fees during your child's enrollment. In such cases, refunds will be issued retroactively by cheque, or a credit will be applied by adjusting future monthly fees to account for the amount, as determined by our bookkeeper.

***BLC** charges a \$25 registration fee per child.



Non-base fees above include parents who arrive between **5:50 and 6:00 p.m. Those who arrive after **6:00 pm** will be charged \$1 per minute. Late fees are not included in the base fee.

6. 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.

7. 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 email confirmation that your application was received. You are encouraged to call and check on your child's place on the waiting list. Most of our spaces become available in the summer or September.

All registration forms are completed through **Lillio**, a secure enrollment platform that safely consolidates all required information in one place.

Registration must be accompanied by a one-time, non-refundable \$25 per family registration fee, as well as a completed Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) form for monthly fees.

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. 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 at 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.

8. Parental Involvement

Beacon Learning Centre is a parent-governed, non-profit co-operative, led by a Board of Directors composed entirely of parents of enrolled children. This structure ensures that family voices are central to decision-making and that the centre continues to reflect the values and priorities of our community.

As a BLC parent, you are an active member of the co-operative. To support the shared operation of the centre, one parent or guardian from each family is required to participate by serving either on the Board of Directors



or on one of our committees. This involvement helps strengthen our community and supports the ongoing quality and sustainability of our programs.

Participation can take many forms. Families may choose to serve in leadership roles, such as Board Treasurer, or contribute through committees focused on areas such as fundraising, maintenance, gardening, toy cleaning, or special events. A full description of Board roles and committees is included in the registration package for each program, allowing families to choose a role that best fits their interests, skills, and availability.

9. 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 communications will also be sent out to remind parents of upcoming fundraising events, registration information and special programs.

BLC uses Lillio to communicate with parents in the event of an early closure or emergency, such as a power outage. Typically, an SMS will be sent via our enrollment platform. In some cases, you may receive a message from an unknown number.

Parents are always welcome to call or email the office at any time to discuss any concerns.

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.

Parents are 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 programs use Storypark to record what each child ate, how much they slept and their toileting. The 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.



10. 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.

11. Integration Procedure

A few days before your child's start date you will receive a call from your child's teacher. They 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. 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.

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.

12. 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 20 toddlers, with an alternate capacity licence of thirty toddlers.

When the alternate capacity* is used, the Toddler Program will have two rooms. The red room licensed for 15 toddlers and the Yellow Room, which is currently licensed for 16 preschoolers with an alternate capacity of 15 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.



Preschool

Currently **BLC** is licensed for 56 preschoolers with an alternate capacity licence of 45 preschoolers.

When the alternate capacity* is used, the Preschool program may use the Green Room. It's currently licensed for 5 Toddlers with an alternate capacity for 5 Preschoolers.

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 senior preschool based upon age, readiness and available space.

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.

*When the alternate capacity is used for the Green and Yellow Rooms, parents will be notified by Storypark.

13. Children with Special Needs

The Beacon Learning Centre has accommodated children with special needs for many years. We work together with Children's Inclusion 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 expresses 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.

14. Daily Schedule

Children may be dropped off any time after **7:30 a.m.** and picked up by **5:45 p.m.** If your child will be absent or arriving significantly later than usual (e.g., after **10:00 a.m.**), please notify the office or send a message through **Storypark**.

Each day begins either outdoors or with **free play** in the child's program room. Educators prepare a variety of engaging activities based on children's interests. These may include sensory experiences (such as sand or water tables), dramatic play (play kitchen), literacy spaces (book corner), creative expression (painting easel, play dough), and construction or problem-solving activities (train tracks, blocks on the rug). Toys and materials are **rotated regularly** and cleaned frequently to reflect children's interests and support ongoing learning.



Throughout the morning, children participate in **snack time, circle time, and outdoor play**. Circle time may take place either before or after outdoor time and typically includes stories, music, finger plays, and group games. In accordance with **Section 47(1)(c) of the CCEYA General Regulation 137/15**, children who are in care for six hours or more each day spend **at least two hours outdoors**, weather permitting, unless otherwise advised in writing by a parent or physician.

Lunch is served at 11:40 a.m. Following lunch, children participate in bathroom and diapering routines and then settle in for **nap or quiet time**. After rest time, children may enjoy another short story or group activity, followed by afternoon snack and additional outdoor play. In winter months, when weather conditions or daylight limit outdoor play, children engage in indoor activities instead. Afternoon snack is typically served around 3:15 p.m.

Open communication and collaboration between families and educators are central to our community, and we encourage you to reach out with questions, ideas, or concerns at any time. We look forward to working together to support your child's learning and well-being.

We are so glad you're here! Welcome to the Beacon Learning Centre community.