Parent Handbook

"Committed Partners in your Child's Growth"

Mission Statement

Early Learning Centre is committed to providing quality care along with learning experiences for all children in a safe, nurturing atmosphere to families in Elgin and the surrounding area.

This is provided through warm, caring, and safe environments, play experiences, and the guidance of trained and experienced staff.

Our commitment embodies respect and support for our families and staff utilizing our services. Through the collaborative efforts of parents, staff, board members, and community partners, opportunities for optimal growth in all areas of development are provided for every child.

Vision Statement

We will continue to build positive and responsive relationships with staff, families, and the community. By engaging in the community in a meaningful way, this partnership ensures that we can focus on children's social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive development in a holistic way.

Program Statement

To ensure that we provide a high-quality experience for families and children, our programming and pedagogy are guided by *How Does Learning Happen?* Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014) document.

- Every child has a sense of **belonging** when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world
- Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and **wellbeing**.
- Every child is an active and **engaged** learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses
- Every child is a capable communicator who **expresses** himself or herself in many ways.

Within a warm, nurturing environment, children actively participate in positive, interactive experiences that are based on their current interests and real-life experiences. Our programs are flexible and creative and provide children opportunities for decision-making and growth towards independence and responsibility.

We view children as resourceful and competent, capable of complex thinking, and rich in potential. By observing the children's interaction and language, we learn about their interests, experiences, and needs. By recognizing and acting upon teachable moments, the program staff engages children in planning activities that are meaningful and relevant to their world. With the guidance of the educators, projects are chosen that generate enough interest and curiosity to provoke children's creative thinking and problem-solving and are open to different avenues of exploration.

We value positive and responsive relationships with families. By engaging families in a meaningful way, this partnership ensures that we can focus on their child's social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive development in a holistic way.

Program Statement Goals and Approaches

Early Learning Centre's Program Statement is consistent with the Minister of Education's policy and statement on programming and policy (0. Reg. 137/15), aligns with our policies and procedures, and is used to guide our work with children and families.

Children have a strong sense of self, health, and well-being. Children are provided with a variety of healthy meals and snacks daily. Children have the opportunity to serve themselves with a variety of choices.

Supportive positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, childcare providers, and staff. This is created through open communication with families, co-workers, and children.

Children are encouraged to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate. Through role modeling and naming emotions children are developing skills to be able to self-regulate with support from educators.

We offer a rich open-ended environment that supports opportunities for a child-led, empowering, and play-based learning and exploration experience. Programming and ongoing projects are generated from observations and children's emergent ideas and interests.

Through keen observations and engagement children are supported in their curiosity and exploration of their natural environment. Children are provided with open-ended materials that allow for the natural flow of creativity and the opportunity to make representations of what they understand or imagine.

Educators plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported. Each child receives equal acknowledgment, encouragement, and engagement.

Our indoor and outdoor environments allow for limited transitions, flexibility for rest periods, and periods of uninterrupted play where safe, rich measures are practiced. Programming allows children the opportunity to sleep, rest or engage in quiet activities based on their individual needs to regenerate or self-regulate.

Educators continue to foster engagement and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children. Using the Lillio program for documentation and ongoing communications, we continue to have open and valuable communication and relationships with all families and children within the program.

To engage local community partners with all aspects of our agency from operations to play-based learning that encompasses cultural and diverse experiences. Parents and local partners are invited to participate in and enhance our programs.

Educators are warm, caring, qualified professionals, carefully chosen through a selection process designed to determine their ability to meet the needs of children. Educators are supported through continuous learning opportunities.

Director's document and review of the impact of the approaches on the children and their families. Directors/Supervisors conduct regular program visits to document, review and discuss with the educators, the impact of the approaches on the children and their families.

Inclusion

ELC is committed to providing high-quality, inclusive programs, and practices that respond to the individual abilities and needs of every child. We know that children need to feel valued, have friends, and feel that they belong. We provide safe, caring environments where all children are valued and have opportunities to participate with their peers in activities that promote their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual growth and development. We foster each child's sense of belonging and feelings of self-worth through respectful and supportive relationships among staff, children, their families, and the community.

Our Educators work in partnership with parents and special needs resource agencies, such as All Kids Belong, to meet the individual needs of children and their staff families. By working collaboratively with parents and resource agencies, we ensure that strategies are implemented that support each child's unique needs.

Approaches for Guiding Children's Success

Our aim is for the children and staff to have a safe and enjoyable time at the program. We establish reasonable limits for behaviour which are consistently monitored by all educators. These limits are appropriate to the developmental level of the child and consider the health, safety, and rights of all individuals. A positive approach is used to guide the children, and each situation and child is considered individually. Our methods include redirection, logical and natural consequences, limit setting, modeling, providing choices, and anticipating situations, recognizing appropriate behavior, and involving children in conflict resolution.

Parent Involvement

Parents are welcome in all aspects of the program. Feedback through questionnaires and daily communication with the program staff are valuable methods of contributing to your child's care. We encourage participation to help with our fundraising ventures or assist with field trips or special events. Parents participating in field trips or special events will be required to provide a current Vulnerable Sector Check.

We use Lillio as a tool to document your children's daily routine and developmental milestones. We use this tool as a way for parents to feel connected and to share with parents and guardians. Photos and developmental milestones for the children will be submitted using the Lillio program.

Permission for Video Taping or Photos

On occasion, the children may be photographed or videotaped. These photos may be used on the ELC website, Facebook, Community Annual Report or the local newspapers for special community announcements or events. These videos could be used for educational purposes or to be shown during events such as an open house or parent information workshops on our programs.

Addressing Matters of Concern

We work in partnership with parents and community partners to meet the individual needs of children and their families. We value positive, respectful, and responsive relationships and foster engagement and ongoing communication with parents about the children and the program.

Open communication with parents is essential to quality childcare experience. Program staff/Home Care Providers will discuss your child's day with you and will ask for your feedback to ensure your child has a positive experience in our program. All issues and concerns brought forward are taken seriously and every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns as quickly as possible. An initial response will be provided within **five (5)** business days.

All issues and concerns will be treated confidentially, and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents, children, staff, students, and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons ie: CAS, Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators.

We strive to meet the needs of all children and families enrolled in our childcare programs. However, in certain situations, it may become necessary for a discussion regarding alternative childcare options. ELC does not make this decision lightly and makes every reasonable effort to meet each child's needs so that they can participate in a meaningful, purposeful, and successful manner in the program.

Depending upon the nature of your concern, please follow the steps below:

Nature of Issue/Concern	Steps to Report Issue/Concerns
Program ie: schedule, sleep arrangements, toilet training, programming activities, feeding arrangements	1. Raise the issue/concern directly with the program educator 2. If the issue cannot be resolved, contact the Director
General Operations-Related ie: childcare fees, staffing, waiting lists, menus	1. Raise the issue/concern directly with the Director

Staff, Student, Volunteer	1. Raise the issue/concern directly with the individual 2. If the issue cannot be resolved contact the Director 3. All issues or concerns about the conduct of staff, students, or volunteers that put a child's health, safety, and well-being at risk should be reported to the Director as soon as it becomes apparent

Should parents express an issue or concern directly with an educator/home care provider, the educator/home care provider will:

- Be attentive and listen carefully – show interest that you want to understand the issue/concern.
- Seek all pertinent information to identify and solve the problem together.
- Plan a mutually agreeable time to meet with a parent when children are not present, if necessary.
- Contact their director for support if a resolution cannot be found.
- Document the situation, which will include the issue/concern and the steps taken to resolve it.
- Should the situation escalate, the Director will contact the Executive Director to discuss the next steps. The next steps may include contacting the Ministry of Education Program Advisor to inform them of the situation.

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Escalation of Issues or Concerns: Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may escalate the issue or concern verbally or in writing to the Executive Director at elcexecutivedirector@earlylearningcentre.ca or at 519-631-7018 ext. 400.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act., 2014 and Ontario Regulation 137/15 should be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, fire department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers etc.) where appropriate.

Respectful Communication and Conduct

At St. Thomas Early Learning Centre, we are committed to fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful environment for all children, families, and staff. As part of this commitment, we expect all individuals to always engage in courteous and professional communication.

Harassment, aggression, intimidation, or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated. This applies to all interactions between parents/guardians, staff, providers, and visitors within our programs and facilities.

If a parent or guardian behaves aggressively or inappropriately toward a staff member:

1. The staff member may immediately end the conversation or interaction if they feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or disrespected.
2. The incident will be reported to the Supervisor and/or Director and documented in writing.
3. A review of the situation will be conducted, which may include follow-up conversations with those involved to determine the next appropriate steps.
4. Follow-up actions may include:
    - A formal warning
    - A required meeting to review expectations around respectful communication
    - Temporary or permanent suspension of access to the Centre, depending on the severity or recurrence of the behavior
    - Notification of authorities in the event of serious threats or violence
5. Staff involved in any such incident will be supported by the management team to ensure their safety and well-being.

We believe that respectful and open communication between families and staff is essential to supporting the growth and development of every child. By working together in partnership and with mutual respect, we can create the best experience possible for your child.

Contacts:

Executive Director is available to set up an appointment at elcexecutivedirector@earlylearningcentre.ca

Ministry of Education, Licensed Child Care Help Desk: 1-877-510-5333 or childcare_ontario@ontario.ca

Duty to Report

The duty to report is an ongoing obligation. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, by law, a report must be made to the Children's Aid Society. The duty to report overrides the provision of any other provincial statute.

Programs

Infant

Our infant programs place importance on providing for the infant's individual needs in a secure, loving, and stimulating environment with a nurturing home away from home atmosphere. The staff ratio is 1 staff to 3 infants and is always maintained as per Ontario Regulations.
Social, emotional, and physical development is fostered through active exploration, sensory, and musical experiences in a safe and supportive, play-based setting. Our infants also learn and explore through outdoor play, and/or community walks daily.
Your child has their own crib/cot for naps throughout the day which are monitored by staff.
We follow your child's schedule and carefully document meals, naps, diaper changes, fluids, and provide photos of your child's engagement throughout the day.
As their move update approaches, your child will have the opportunity to visit the Toddler classroom for short periods of time so that the environment, staff, and other children are familiar to them.

We ask that parents provide the following items clearly labeled with their child's name:

- Diapers
- Wipes

- Seasonal outdoor clothing (hats without strings, mittens, boots, snow pants/splash pants, etc.)
- 3 changes of clothing
- Blanket or comfort toy (if needed) for rest times
- Soother and clips (if needed)
- Bottles (and liners if needed)
- Water cup
- Formula in a sealed container/ breast milk/ homo milk (we will provide homo milk during lunch)
- Footwear for indoors and outdoors
- Sunscreen
- Cream or powder (if required)

Toddler

Toddler program ranges from 18 to 30 months of age.

The toddler learning environment is full of rich, meaningful exploration to engage all their senses. Through observation of children's interests, we plan and implement experiences both inside and outside allowing children to guide their own learning using caregivers as resources for further exploration and learning.

Educators keep in mind children's individual needs and abilities while planning and implementing programs that facilitate belonging, engagement, well-being, and expression.

Outside we encourage gross motor development in various ways, including risk play, and exploration of weather and the environment around us.

During all our indoor and outdoor exploration, children are encouraged to use all their senses to extend their learning. Which leads to explorations of smiles and wet clothing.

Please send children extra clothing (2 or 3 full outfits), diapers, diaper creams, wipes, sunscreen (when needed), and indoor shoes. We do go outside in all weather, please make sure proper outdoor wear is provided. Labeling all your child's items with their name will help them from being misplaced.

Preschool

Our preschool program offers a unique combination of emergent curriculum, Montessori, High Scope, and Reggio Emilia. Together these philosophies create a well-rounded program that encourages children to be creative, imaginative, and independent all while being present in a nurturing and warm environment.

Our preschool programs offer a home-like environment that fosters each child's ability to learn. Each classroom contains areas for creativity, sensory, discovery, dramatic play, reading, blocks, and woodworking. Children are given extended periods of time to develop their own ideas as well as strengthen their skills.

Outside Food

Due to the increasing amount of food allergies among young children, it is our policy to restrict outside foods from coming into any St. Thomas Early Learning programs. If your child has food allergies, please see the steps below.

The following steps will be followed:

- Any substituted food items from home must be in the original store-bought container.
- Parents may provide food for their infants, as children at this age are on individual diets. All food for your infant must be brought in the original unopened store-bought container. If your child is on homemade pureed food our Food Handler can puree food from our menu. Please indicate your infant's needs in writing to their primary caregiver or Centre Director.
- We strive to accommodate the diets of children with food allergies or sensitivities. Parents are encouraged to review our menu prior to their child's start date so they can send a list along with the food/drink items that will be used as a substitute.
- For families with religious beliefs around food, a substitute food item will be provided to the child that still meets the nutritional needs of the child.
- Families are not permitted to bring in food items for special occasions. Also, homemade foods are not permitted in any programs due to the inability to determine the ingredients used.
- The Educator along with the Food Handler will review any outside food when arriving to ensure parents are meeting the above requirements.

Healthy Eating

Nutritious lunches and snacks are prepared daily for your child. By following Canada's Food Guide and "Paint Your Plate" a rotational menu is planned and posted for your reference. As some children enrolled in the program may have life-threatening food allergies, except for infants not yet on table foods, outside foods may not be brought into the Centre/Home.

In partnership with parents, every effort will be made to accommodate your child's food allergies and/or dietary restrictions. All possible strategies to reduce the risk of exposure to allergens are practiced, however, it is not possible to reduce the risk to zero.

Health and Administration of Medication

All prescription medication must be in the original container with a prescription label that is clearly marked with your child's name, date, the name of the medication, and the instructions for storage and administration. Program Staff/Home Care Provider will only administer medication according to the instructions on the prescription label. A medication form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian prior to administering medication to a child. Our staff/providers will document and initial: the dosage, time given, and any side effects observed each time medication is administered. Please ensure that the medication is passed on to the program staff/provider for safe storage. Medication will be administered at 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Previsions can be made by the Centre Director or Designate if changes to administration times are required. Parents will be required to initial the medication form daily.

Non-prescription topical creams must be in the original container, clearly labeled with a list of ingredients.
Due to the frequency and their longer-term daily usage, any non-prescription creams or ointments that are being supplied by a parent/guardian (i.e.: Sunscreen, Vaseline, over-the-counter diaper creams or lotions, etc.) that are to be applied to a child, will be administered as directed by the parent/guardian.
If at any time the administration is changed by the parent/guardian, over and above the regular routine of care originally provided, the cream will need to be checked in at the Centre and a medication form will need to be completed.

Program staff/Home Care Providers will not accept a non-prescription topical cream if the contents include an identified allergen for any child enrolled in the program. Homemade treatments, essential oils or topical creams will not be administered.

For children who have an anaphylactic allergy, severe asthma, diabetes, or seizures an Individual Protocol will be established between the parents and the Director and reviewed with program staff/providers.

All ongoing medication information and protocols must be reviewed, signed, and dated by the parent **annually** or if changes are made, to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. We may ask you to follow specific guidelines to ensure the safety of all children in our care.

Anaphylactic Children

An anaphylactic child is one who has a severe, life-threatening allergy. They could experience very strong reactions such as rashes, hives, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue, and throat, difficulty breathing, and/or loss of consciousness.

- Please assist us by not bringing any food (breakfast, snacks, or treats in hands, mouth, or pockets) into the Centre.
- Please ensure that your child's hands and face have been washed with soap and water after eating as even touch to the skin with a contaminated source could cause a life-threatening reaction.
- If food is brought from home parents are to label food brought to the childcare centre with the child's full name and the date the food arrived at the childcare centre, and that parents advise of all ingredients.
- When food is provided from home for children, educators will provide appropriate supervision to ensure that food is not shared or exchanged.
- See lunch bag procedure for school-age children.
- Please remember to have a spare set of clothing in case your child should spill any food or drink on themselves.

Immunization

Under the Childcare and Early Years Act, Medical Officers of Health must have an immunization record on file for children in licensed childcare Centre. Having a child's record on file will also help Southwestern Public Health find out who is at risk if there is an outbreak. If there is an outbreak, children who do not have proof of immunization or immunity may not be allowed at the childcare centre until it is over, or they are immunized.

If children are not immunized for medical or personal reasons, an exemption form is required to be on file.

The operator of a licensed childcare centre forwards all immunization records and updates to Southwestern Public Health. A Public Health Nurse meets yearly with licensed childcare centre operators to review the immunization records for all children who are currently enrolled in the Centre.
If a child is overdue for any immunizations, the Public Health Nurse will provide a letter to the operator of the childcare centre to give to the parent/guardian.
If the immunization has still not been completed by the date on the letter, your child may not be able to attend childcare until the immunization is given.

Every time your child receives an immunization, please forward the information to:
The childcare Centre at: admin@earlylearningcentre.ca
The Southwestern Public Health at: www.swpublichealth.ca/vaccineswork

Illness of a Child

The Childcare and Early Years Act requires that:

- Prior to admission, each child must be immunized according to the local medical officer of health.
- When a child is ill, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately and is required to pick up their child from the program to protect the interest of the sick child and to prevent further infection.

ELC follows the guidelines set out by Southwestern Public Health. If your child becomes ill during the program and is unable to actively participate in program activities, they will be isolated from the rest of the group. Care will be provided until you can be contacted, and your child can be taken home. If we are unable to contact you, we will telephone the emergency contacts on your child's registration form and request that they pick your child up from the Centre. We would then continue to try and contact you to inform you of the situation.
Fever-reducing medications mask symptoms and do not allow caregivers to properly monitor the wellness of your child. If your child requires fever-reducing medications to participate in their day, they will not be accepted into care.

Southwestern Public Health requires that we follow health and safety guidelines. The following are examples of conditions where children **will not** be accepted into care, or **will be** sent home:

- Fever of 38.4 C or 101 F or greater, using underarm thermometer **(required to stay home 24 hours symptom free)**
- Diarrhea **(2 episodes unless the first is accompanied by other symptoms, required to stay home for 24 hours symptom Free)**

- Vomiting **(2 episodes unless the first is accompanied by other symptoms, required to stay home for 24 hours symptoms free)**
- Undiagnosed skin rash/condition
- Communicable disease
- Discharge from ears or eyes
- Head lice
- Administration, prior to arrival, of fever-reducing medication due to fever

If the Centre is experiencing an outbreak that includes vomit and/or diarrhea, children will be sent home immediately after one bout of diarrhea or vomiting and must remain home until they are symptom free for 48 hrs.

Outdoor Learning

Experiences in nature are very important to the development of young children. Outdoor experiences enhance physical health, intellectual development, and emotional well-being, and increase focus and academic achievement. Learning outdoors provides opportunities for curiosity and wonder and provides a different and meaningful learning environment.

Our daily program schedule allows children the opportunity to participate in outdoor activities every morning and afternoon. To help your child feel comfortable and ready to explore and learn in the outdoors, we ask that you provide appropriate clothing for the weather each day i.e.: rain boots, raincoats, and splash pants for wet days: snow pants, boots, hats, extra mittens, etc. for cold, snowy days.

It is advised to keep an extra set of clothing on site for our child so that children have the freedom to explore and create while eliminating the stress of getting dirty or wet. All items must be clearly labeled with your child's name. Every effort will be made to locate misplaced or missing items; however, we cannot be responsible for lost items.

During the summer months, children must wear a hat, preferably with a wide brim or neck flap to protect their sensitive ears and neck.
We request that you provide a bottle of sunscreen to the program to help ensure that your child is protected from the harmful rays of the sun. Due to allergies and skin sensitivities, the sunscreen must be in the original container, clearly labeled with your child's name. We recommend using a broad-spectrum UVA and UVB sunscreen, with SPF #30 or higher. Please ensure your sunscreen does not contain any nut ingredients. As there is a waiting time for the sunscreen to become effective, we request that you apply sunscreen on your child, prior to coming to the program.

Excursions

Excursions represent a creative teaching method that takes children out of the familiar classroom environment and allows them to experience new things. Excursions enrich and expand the curriculum and strengthen observation skills by immersing children in sensory activities while expanding their awareness of their own community.

Notice will be posted in advance of the excursion, informing you of the destination, time, date, and entrance fee. If there is a fee required, then you will be responsible for paying for the cost of the trip prior to the event date. You will also be required to sign a permission form allowing your child to participate.

Periods of Rest

The well-being of all children in our programs is supported through programming that supports each child's varied psychological and biological rhythms by providing materials, time, and space for active play, rest, and quiet time.

Rest is an important part of the day for all children. The need for sleep and/or rest time varies greatly among children. Toddlers and preschool-aged children may sleep for up to two hours daily. If children are unable to sleep after twenty minutes, they are to get up from their cots to participate in quiet activities for the remainder of the period.

All infants under 12 months of age will be placed on their backs for sleep until they are able to roll from their backs to their stomachs or sides on their own. Any request to place an infant in a different position for sleep ie, on their side or stomach will require a written letter from the child's physician. A copy of ELC's sleep policy will be available to parents at the time of registration/orientation.

Further to the Joint Statement on Safe Sleep: Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada, parents have the choice if they would like their infant child (age 0 – 17 months) to rest in a crib or on a cot. At 18 months, children must be resting on a cot. Please inform the Director of your child's sleep preferences and/or required accommodations. We work in partnership with parents to ensure that the duration of each child's rest period while participating in our program does not disrupt normal sleep patterns at home.

Monitoring Compliance and Contraventions

On a monthly basis, the Director, or designate visits the program to observe and document compliance with the implementation of program policies and procedures, Program Statement goals and approaches, and individuals Support Plans.
Follow-up support as required.

Prohibited Practices

At no time with respect to a child receiving childcare at a childcare Centre, it operates or at premises where it oversees the provision of childcare. Will not allow the use of:

(a) Corporal punishment of the child.
(b) physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a highchair, car seat, stroller, or other devices 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.
(c) locking the exits of the childcare Centre or home childcare 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.
(d) 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.
(e) depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding; or
(f) Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

The Early Learning Centre stresses the importance of children's emotional development. Children should never be discouraged from expressing their feelings; instead, they should be taught how to express them constructively rather than resort to physical aggression/violence.

Situations should be discussed with children so that they may gain an understanding of the problem. If another child is involved both children should be taken aside, and each child should be encouraged to express his/her feelings. Educators can help Infants and Toddlers who are feeling aggressive by giving them the words or hand signs to express what they are feeling.

Fire Drill

Fire drills are practiced once per month. Fire drills are recorded and initialed by the Director. Posted by each classroom exit door is a detailed outline of the emergency procedures followed in case of evacuation of the Centre, as well as the evacuation site. Please familiarize yourself with this information.

Licensing

Licenses are obtained through the Ministry of Education (MEDU) to operate our Children's Centre's. The program is inspected and licensed annually, and a license is issued upon successful completion of the licensing procedure. More information about licensing is available on the Ministry website at ww.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents.

Program Hours

Center-based daytime care is open from 6:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

Care

Full-time care takes priority over any part-time positions.

Part-time scheduled days must be submitted to the office six months in advance to ensure available care. Any changes to contracted days must be forwarded to the office with a minimum of 2 weeks' notice, subject to availability.

Full-time - Full-time fees (billed at 5 days per week), are applicable for children attending 5 days per week.

Part-time - Part-time fees (billed at 2-3 days/week), are applicable for children attending 2-3 days per week.

Spaces will not be held in the event of lengthy absenteeism (e.g. summer months, pregnancy leave)

Safe Arrival and Dismissal Departure

Purpose

This policy and the procedure will 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 childcare 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.

Note: definitions for terms used throughout this policy are provided in a Glossary at the end of the document.

Policy

General

- Early Learning Centre will ensure that any child receiving childcare at the childcare centre is only released to the child's parent/guardian or an individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization the childcare centre may release the child to.
- Early Learning Centre will only dismiss children into the care of their parent/guardian or another authorized individual. The centre will not release any children from care without supervision.
- 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.

Additional Policy Statements

Parent/Guardian are to provide contact information including names, address and phone numbers of persons authorized to pick up their child/ren. This information is to be provided on the Child(ren) registration form.

On arrival to pick up child(ren) authorized persons who are unknown to staff are to provide proper photo identification to the Staff. If an authorized person does not bring identification, they will not be able to pick up the child(ren).

Parent/Guardian will be notified that their child was not released into persons care because identification was not shown.

Procedures

To ensure the safety of the children, and to meet our legal requirements, children be signed in each morning and out each afternoon.

Arrival – Child/ren will be brought to the classroom by their parent/guardian. The educator is to sign the child/ren in on their attendance sheet and complete the health check. Educator and parent/guardian can exchange messages at this time.

Departure – Parent/Guardian will pick up their child/ren from their classroom. The Educator will sign the child out at this time. Educator and parent/guardian can exchange messages at this time.

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.
    - ask the parent/guardian how the child's evening/morning has been and if there are any changes to the child's pick-up procedure (i.e., someone other than the parent/guardian picking up). 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 via Digibot on the child's emergency card which is located in classroom binder or where the individual is not listed, ask the parent/guardian to provide authorization for pick-up in writing, this can be in the form of a note or message email via Digibot the Centre's communication app.
    - 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 childcare 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 their program supervisor or director and the staff will commence contacting the child's parent/guardian no later than 11:00 am. Staff will begin to contact the parent/guardian by sending an email

via Centre's program app; staff will also place a phone call to the parent/guardian. If staff are unable to make, contact with the parent/guardian within a one (1) hour of message sent program staff will contact supervisor or director to inform them of the absent child.

- Supervisor/director will begin the process to contact parent/guardian by phone and email via Lilo communication app. If unable to make contact with parent/guardian supervisor or director will contact emergency contacts.
- If still unable to make contact with parent/guardian the following day emergency contacts will be called. Will document that contact was made with the emergency contacts.

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 childcare may release the child to. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual),
2. confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
3. 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 after one (1) hour has passed, the staff shall proceed with contacting the parent/guardian, the program staff shall contact the parent/guardian with a phone call and a message via Digibot (communication app). and advise that the child is still in care and has not been picked up.
   - Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian, staff must call again and leave message with parent/guardian. 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.

- Where the staff has not heard back from the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was to pick up the child, the staff shall wait until the program closes and then refer to procedures when 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 5:30 pm, staff shall ensure that the child is given a snack and activity, while they await their pick-up.
2. One staff shall stay with the child, while a second staff proceeds with calling 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 will begin contacting authorized individuals listed on the child's emergency contact form.
4. Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file by 6:00 pm, the staff shall proceed with contacting the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) 519-631-1492. Staff shall follow the CAS's direction with respect to next steps.
5. Staff will contact Executive Director and Centre Director. Executive Director and Director will return to the Centre to assist the staff. If Executive Director is unable to attend Centre Supervisor will return to the Centre to assist the staff.

Dismissing a child from care without supervision procedures

Staff will only release children from care to the parent/guardian or other authorized adult. Under no circumstances will children be released from care to walk home alone.

Glossary

Individual authorized to pick-up/authorized individual: a person that the parent/guardian has advised the childcare program staff in writing can pick-up their child from care.

Licensee: The individual or corporation named on the license issued by the Ministry of Education responsible for the operation and management of the childcare Centre and home child agency.

Parent/guardian: A person having lawful custody of a child or a person who has demonstrated a settled intention to treat a child as a child of his or her family.

Change of Care

ELC requires two weeks' notice for a reduction in care or a change in our start date. Request for an increase in care will only be possible if current enrolment allows.

If your child attends part-time and you would like to switch days within the month, you may be able to do so provided the request is made in advance and space is available. Days may not be switched due to illness, vacations, Public Holidays, or inclement weather.

Please speak with the Centre Director for information on changing care.

Withdrawal from the Program

We require that you notify the Director in writing two weeks prior to withdrawing your child from any program. Fees will be charged for the two weeks' notice whether or not your child attends.

Please note, if you receive subsidized care, you are also responsible for providing two weeks' notice to Children's Services as well.

A refund will be issued for any resulting overpayment, provided the required two weeks' notice is given. In lieu of notice, two weeks' fees will be required.

Space cannot be guaranteed if you wish to temporarily withdraw your child. In the event of a temporary withdrawal, you will need to place your child's name on the waiting list.

For parents enrolled for Pre-Authorized Debit, a notice of your child's withdrawal must be received two weeks in advance to ensure the cancellation of your next scheduled automatic withdrawal.

Changes in Registration

Please relay any changes in your child's registration to the Director immediately. In the event of an emergency, your child's safety could depend on the accuracy of this information ie; address, phone number, work information, and emergency contacts. When changes occur, you will be requested to sign and date the updated registration form as verification of accuracy.

Transitions

Transitions from one age group to another will depend upon the availability of space, as well as the age and/or developmental level of the individual child.

In preparation for a child to make a transition, the Director will schedule a time for parents to:

- Meet their child's new teacher
- Discuss the proposed date of the move
- Communicate any special circumstances or health considerations
- Review menus – if different from the current group
- Share information regarding new program routines

Prior to the transition, a few short visits will be scheduled to help your child become familiar with the new room.

Centre Closures

The Centre may close due to severe inclement weather conditions, power failure, or circumstances beyond our control. If during the program hours the Centre is not able to operate due to power failure or similar circumstances, you will be contacted immediately.

Emergency Management

The Early Learning Centre has Emergency Management Policies & Procedures in place. In the event of an Emergency, families will be contacted by phone. If you would like to view the Emergency Management policy, please send an email to admin@earlylearningcentre.ca

Statutory Holidays/Program Closure Days

All programs will be closed for the following **statutory** and **non-statutory** holidays;

New Year's Day	Civic Holiday
Family Day	Labour Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Easter Monday	Christmas Day
Victoria Day	Boxing Day
Canada Day	

If any of the holidays above fall on your child's regular scheduled day to attend, you will be invoiced for that day at the daily rate. If your child is not regularly scheduled on that day, you will not be invoiced for the day.

Our programs will be closed the week between Christmas Eve and New Year's each year. Families will NOT be invoiced for non-holiday days during the closure.

Each year the Early Learning Centre recognizes one (1) PD Days for all Centre Employees and all Elgin Home Childcare Providers. ELC Childcare Centre's and Home Care Provider's homes will be closed on both of those days. Parents will receive notice of the PD Days and closures one month prior to the date.

Supervision of Students and Volunteers

Volunteers and students may participate in a childcare opportunity by fulfilling the requirements of the Vulnerable Sector Check, participating in a Policy and Procedure review, and at the discretion of ELC. All volunteers and students participating in a childcare opportunity will be under the direct supervision of educators/home care providers and will never be left alone with the children. All students and volunteers will participate in tasks and responsibilities that are directly related to their school's curriculum/volunteer positions.

Serious Occurrence Notification

The safety and well-being of your children is our highest priority, however, despite all the best precautions, incidents can sometimes happen. A "Serious Occurrence Notification Form" will be posted in a visible area on site, for 10 days, when an

incident occurs that is deemed a serious occurrence, as per the government's definition. A serious occurrence does not mean that the program is out of compliance with licensing requirements or that the children are at risk at the Centre/Homes.

Attendance and/or Sign-In/Out

Request for copies of attendance, and sign-in/out must be made in writing by the requesting parent's legal counsel. There will be a fee charged to the ordering party.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act

This act requires licensed programs to comply with this regulation; therefore, no person may smoke or hold lighted tobacco, smoke, or hold lighted medical cannabis, smoke or hold a designed product or substance, or use an electronic cigarette, in any location where childcare is provided by ELC/EHCC, whether or not children are present.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

ELC/EHCC fully supports the AODA (Customer Service) Act. Should you require assistance in accessing information regarding our programs and services, please contact your Program Coordinator.

Registration

Registration and Orientation Procedure

We request that you visit the Centre/Home Care prior to enrollment to meet with the Director, review your registration forms and observe the program. Your child should accompany you to familiarize him or her with the staff and the surroundings. The full registration package must be completed prior to your child participating in the program.

- All forms must be fully completed prior to your child's start date
- Parent/Guardian #1 listed on the registration form will receive all written correspondence. This parent will also be issued the annual income tax receipt by the end of February. Should you request a duplicate income tax receipt beyond the past calendar year, there will be a **non-base fee of $20.00** which is **non-refundable** and will be charged to the account.

Canada Wide Early Learning Childcare System

St. Thomas Early Learning Centre participates in the CWELCC system.

Early Learning Centre- Program Fees

Childcare fees will be based on the Canada Wide Early Childcare System Agreement.

January – December 2026 Centre	**Infants**	**Toddlers**	**Preschoolers**	**6 years – 12 years**
Base Fees				
Full time Daily Fee	$22.00	$22.00	$21.26	N/A
Part time Daily Fee	$22.00	$22.00	$22.00	N/A

Non-Base Fees

Monthly late fee - 2.5% charge - will be applied to any outstanding balances.
PAD Charge - $45.00 bank fee for PAD's returned
Late Fee - $10.00 for every 15 minutes or portion thereof
Field Trips – as applicable
Beyond Calendar Year Child Care Tax Receipts - $20.00

Outstanding Balance

Families with an outstanding balance exceeding 30 days will receive a notification along with a letter outlining available repayment options.

For accounts that are 60 days past due with no payment plan in place, the following actions will be taken: your childcare space will be terminated, the outstanding account will be sent to collections, and all applicable interest and court fees will be added to the balance owed.

Refund/Credit Policy

Operating costs are based on the number of children enrolled in our programs and these expenses exist whether children attend their scheduled days or not. Our fees are based on holding a guaranteed child care space. This means that even when a child is away, we continue to staff the room and maintain the space for them, so it is available when they return. This ensures consistent care and allows us to maintain appropriate educator-to- child ratio.

Childcare fee refunds and credits are **not applicable** and will **not be processed** for any:

- Unscheduled closures, this includes inclement weather closures.
- Absences from care related to missed days, sick days and/or vacation.
- Withdrawal notifications from the program were made with less than **10 business days' notice.**

Payment fees are due on the first business day of each month.

Payment Methods

Monthly invoices will be finalized within the last week of the month for the following month. This invoice is due on the first business day of the month.
If your child starts within the month, you will receive an invoice prior to your starting date that must be paid by the start date.

Accounts are to be paid in full by;

- Visa, Mastercard or American Express
- Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD)

All Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) Credit Card (CC) forms are to be completed on the Digibot Parent Portal at the time of registration.
Automatic withdrawals for your child's monthly childcare fees will be processed on the first business day of each month.
If you receive subsidized care, your invoice will be ready at the start of each month. Payment for the previous month is due by the 15th.

Should you anticipate an issue with your payment, please contact the Finance Manager at finance@earlylearningcentre.ca with sufficient notice. There will be a $45.00 service fee for returned Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD)

Late Fees

Please notify the Centre if any unexpected delays occur. There will be a late fee of 10.00 charged every 15 minutes or a portion thereof. You will be required to sign the departure time in the late fee book, and you will receive a Late Fee Notice. The fee is to be remitted to the Finance Manager within 5 business days of the issue. In the event of excessive late pickups, care may be discontinued.

Termination of Care

If there are any issues that are brought to our attention by our staff, parents/ guardians, a meeting will be scheduled to address the concerns. The meeting will involve the director, necessary staff members, and the parent/guardian. The concern(s) will be clearly noted and discussed throughout the meeting. A plan will be designed to solve the issue(s) and a second meeting will be arranged to reassess the situation after a week has passed. If the issue(s) is still not resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved, a 2-week written notice of termination of services will be issued.

Services may be terminated by the Centre if policies are not followed, fees are not paid, or if the program is unsuitable for your child.

Childcare Fee Subsidy

If you are receiving a childcare fee subsidy, assistance will continue based on approval from your subsidy provider (St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services). You must notify our subsidy provider:

- To arrange approval if your child is absent **five** or more consecutive days ie: illness or vacation
- To arrange approval for consistent absent days ie: every Monday
- To arrange approval for a change in your child's enrollment, transfer to another program or home care provider
- When you withdraw your child from care
- If there are changes to your address, phone number, or employment information

Note: if you do not receive prior approval for any of the above situations, subsidy will not pay for these absent days or changes, and you will be responsible for paying all full fees to the Early Learning Centre directly. Refer to the information sheet that you received from your subsidy provider for further details.

If you are interested in Childcare Fee Subsidy, please contact St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services, childcare intake at 519-631-9350 option #3.

Waitlist Policy

This policy and the procedure within provide for waiting lists to be administered in a transparent manner. It supports the availability of information about the waiting list for prospective parents in a way that maintains the privacy and confidentiality of children.

The procedures provide steps that will be followed to place children on the waiting list, offer admission, and provide parents with information about their child's position on the waiting list.

This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under Ontario Regulation 137/15 for a childcare centre that maintains a waiting list to have related policies and procedures.

Note: definitions for terms used throughout this plan are provided in a Glossary at the end of the document.

- Early Learning Centre will strive to accommodate all requests for the registration of a child at the childcare centre.
- Where the maximum capacity of a program has been reached and spaces are unavailable for new children to be enrolled, the waiting list procedures set out below will be followed.
- No fee will be charged to parents for placing a child on the waiting list.

Receiving a Request to Place a Child on the Waiting List

1. The licensee or designate will receive parental requests to place children on a waiting list via email, phone or in person. The link for the website will be emailed to the family to create a profile on the waiting list.

Placing a child on the Waiting List

1. The licensee or designate will place a child on the waiting list in chronological order, based on the date and time that the request was received.

2. Once a child has been placed on the waiting list, the licensee or designate will inform parents of their child's position on the list.

3. As a profile is accepted on the waiting list, the HR Admin will send out an email confirming receipt of application for childcare. A tour of the chosen Centre will be offered at that time.

Determining Placement Priority when Space Becomes Available

1. When space becomes available in the program, priority will be given in chronological order of application date with consideration to existing families and staff children.

2. Once these children have been placed, other children on the waiting list will be prioritized based on program room availability and the chronology in which the child was placed on the waiting list.

Offering an Available Space

1. Parents of children on the waiting list will be notified via phone that a space has become available in their requested program.

2. Parents will be provided with a time frame of one week in which a response is required before the next child on the waiting list will be offered the space.

3. Where a parent has not responded within the given time frame, the licensee or designate will contact the parent of the next child on the waiting list to offer them the space.

Responding to Parents who inquire about their Child's Placement on the Waiting List

1. The HR Admin will be the contact person for parents who wish to inquire about the status of their child's place on the waiting list.

2. The HR Admin will respond to parent inquiries and provide the child's current position on the list and an estimated likelihood of the child being offered a space in the program.

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

1. The waiting list will be maintained in a manner that protects the privacy and confidentiality of the children and families on the list and therefore only the child's position on the waiting list will be provided to parents.

2. Names of other children or families and/or their placement on the waiting list will not be shared with other individuals.

Glossary

Licensee: The individual or corporation named on the license issued by the Ministry of Education responsible for the operation and management of the childcare Centre.

Parent: A person having lawful custody of a child or a person who has demonstrated a settled intention to treat a child as a child of his or her family (all references to parent include legal guardians but will be referred to as "parent" in the policy).

Pandemic Emergency Management Practices

In the event of a Pandemic, ELC will refer to the Pandemic Policies that are in place and aligned with the Ministry of Education and Southwestern Public Health. When Pandemic Policies are updated, parents will receive an update of the policy. If you would like to view the Pandemic Emergency Management policy, please send an email to admin@earlylearningcentre.ca

Resource Links

Ministry of Education Information on Child Care www.edu.gov.on.ca/childare

How Does Learning Happen? Document www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf

Southwest Public Health https://www.swpublichealth.ca/

Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index-eng.php

Early Learning Centre
Childcare Centre Locations

Centre	Address	Phone Number
Dalewood Centre	575 Burwell Rd	519-631-7018
Orchard Park	200 Peach Tree	519-631-7018
Aspen Ave	1 Aspen Ave	519-631-7018
Aylmer	344 Talbot Street E	519-773-3505