

Countryside Preschool

Parent Handbook

Welcome to Countryside Preschool!

Countryside Preschool is a non-profit society that offers two streams of enrollment (drop-and-go and parent-participation). The preschool is run by an elected board of parents (also referred to as the executive). The board hires and supports the ECE and staff, develops and manages a workable budget, deals with the concerns of the members, and maintains various committees throughout the year. We also offer non-board positions of parent participation, such as maintenance, cleaning, and Thursday helpers. We welcome caregiver involvement on a purely voluntary basis.

Our “drop and go” positions have higher fees but no extra time commitments. Families in this stream are still welcome to participate in the Countryside community, such as fundraising, field trips, volunteering, and social events.

Families in “parent participation” positions have lower fees but hold a mandatory job to assist in the operation of the preschool. Board members commit to monthly board meetings during the school year. Parent-participation families are required to participate in fundraising and general upkeep of the preschool as able. This may include (but is not limited to) participating in school cleaning and the annual silent auction. All Countryside families are welcome to volunteer in the classroom! Parents of children in both streams have voting privileges at the annual general meeting.

General Information for Parents

Information for All Caregivers

Please pass the following information on to all caregivers (fathers, babysitters, nannies, relatives, or friends) who transport your child to and from preschool. This will help assure your child's safety and help our preschool run smoothly.

Parking lot safety

Please park cars in the large lot south of the building, or back into the spaces across from the entrance to the school. The wheelchair accessible spots near the playground gate are reserved for those with a valid disabled placard on their vehicle.

Preschool hours

Preschool starts at 9:00am and ends at 12:55pm. Please check in with the ECE when you drop off and pick up your child so the ECE can keep track of attendance (an attendance sheet needs to be signed by caregivers at both times). We also ask that you not drop children off earlier than 9:00am. The staff need adequate time to set up the classroom and be prepared to greet and settle the children as they arrive. At the end of school, children are to be picked up promptly. If a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of preschool closing, emergency contact people will be phoned to arrange pick up.

The preschool is closed all stat holidays, two weeks for spring break, two weeks for Christmas vacation, and the fourth week of June.

Insufficient staff

If the children-to-teacher ratio (regulated by childcare licensing) cannot be met due to staffing, the preschool may close for the day. An example of this is a teacher falls ill and a substitute teacher cannot be arranged for the day. The preschool makes every attempt to avoid this situation from occurring. If it does occur, the school will promptly communicate this closure to parents by phone and/or email.

Assisting children

If the class is starting outside, we ask that children be escorted into the preschool building and that you assist them with their lunch kits, and coats and hats etc. before bringing them to the playground. Please gather all their belongings and art work before retrieving them at 12:55pm.

Enrollment Package

The following forms are required by the provincial government licensing board and a child may not attend until the preschool has received these forms:

- Enrollment form and emergency information sheet
- A Criminal Record Check (vulnerable sector) for parents involved in parent-participation duties and volunteers planning to help in the classroom more than 2 days in the school year
- Copies of T.B. testing form (required for those born in countries where there is a high incidence of T.B. A list of these countries can be provided upon request).
- Copy of immunization record (up-to-date immunizations required for enrollment; see preschool policies for details regarding medical exemptions)
- Copies of any legal documents or court documents related to custody of child

Other forms required by the preschool:

- Child History Form
- Parent Agreement Form

Withdrawals

Notification of withdrawal from the preschool must be made in writing to the secretary. One month's notice is required, otherwise one month's fees shall be paid in lieu of notice.

Tuition

June fees are to be prepaid when you register your child for the school year. This becomes a deposit in the event you withdraw your child from the school without sufficient notice (see above). Fees for all remaining months are to be paid by post-dated cheques, e-transfer, or pre-authorized debit. To make a payment arrangement, please contact our treasurer.

Affordable Child Care Benefit

Families may qualify for a government subsidy to help with the cost of preschool program. If you are planning to apply for the childcare subsidy, please apply ASAP as the approval process can take weeks to months to be processed by the government. If you have questions regarding government subsidies, please contact Child Care Subsidy (Ministry of Children and Family Development) at 250-356-6501 or Child Care Resource and Referral at 250-382-7000.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Countryside requires all families, including those applying for subsidy, to pay the full fees as outlined above. Once the preschool receives child care subsidy from the government, families will be reimbursed the appropriate amount. If this policy will cause severe hardship to your family, please contact the treasurer to discuss.

Set-up and push-back

At the end of the week, the preschool may be required to move its equipment/supplies closer to the stage. This occurs so that other parties may use part of the church hall on non-preschool days. These are known as push-backs. The degree of push-back varies, but always happens on Thursdays. Sometimes the school does a "full push-back" in which preschool property is moved onto the stage and into the back nursery area. Other times we only need to push back half way across the room. Families are asked to arrive fifteen minutes before class ends on push-back Thursdays.

The preschool has to reset its equipment/supplies prior to its Monday Stay N Play program. Emails are

usually sent in advance asking if any volunteers are able to assist the ECE in this task. Reset time varies depending on availability of volunteers.

Clothing for children

Please send your child in comfortable play clothes that you would not mind getting dirty. Provide soft-soled Velcro or slip-on shoes, or non-marking rubber soled slippers for indoors, as these allow your child to be more independent. Also provide suitable outdoor clothes because half of our program occurs outside in all but the most extreme weather. We also ask that you provide your child with a hat, rain pants, boots, and mittens. Outdoor clothes and footwear should be labeled with your child's name. Please provide a spare set of clothing, including socks and underwear, to be kept at the school. Parents are encouraged to teach children to manage dressing independently.

Snacks and Lunches

The policy at Countryside is for the children to bring enough food for a snack and for lunch consisting of nutritious food and water. Please pack children's snacks and lunches with an ice pack to ensure foods do not spoil. Please refrain from sending food that requires heating. Yearly the ECE will review any allergy concerns and adapt the program to meet the needs of each individual child. This may mean certain foods are restricted in the classroom.

Snack suggestions

- water
- fruit
- raw vegetables
- crackers
- cheese
- muffins
- dried fruit
- yogurt
- sandwiches
- unsweetened cereal
- mini bagels

Birthdays

If you wish to acknowledge your child's birthday (e.g. cupcakes for the class), please consult to the ECE beforehand. If the birthday does not fall on a school day, then you may wish to choose a date before or after.

Toys from Home

It is generally recommended that "home" toys stay at home. If your child asks, they will be told that if they want to bring a toy from home they have to be prepared to share it because at preschool we share all the toys. They must also be prepared that even though we tell all the children to be gentle with the toys, their toy may get broken. This is often enough for the child to make the decision to keep it in their cubby or not to bring it at all. If the parent definitely does not want a toy to be brought into school, then the ECE will support this decision.

Field Trip Policies

Caregivers are responsible for their respective children during field trips and must remain during the entirety of the session. Parents will be notified in advance about all field trips, and a notice giving all details will be posted on the bulletin board or through email.

Generally siblings are welcome, but occasionally the setting may not be suitable for a larger group or younger children. Attendance of siblings will be at the discretion of the ECE.

Health and Illness

It is best for everyone if you keep your child at home when he/she is ill. Germs are readily transmitted in the preschool setting where toys, equipment, and snack are shared. Keep in mind that a child who is ill does not have a positive experience while trying to cope with all of the cooperating and concentrating demands typical in a routine preschool session. Please call the preschool to notify the ECE if your child will be absent.

In the event that your child becomes ill at preschool, you will be contacted immediately to pick up your child. This includes instances of vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or a general sense of not feeling well enough to participate in the program. Staff will support your child to be comfortable in an area away from the other children in order to minimize the spread of viruses until you arrive. If you cannot be contacted right away, staff will contact your emergency contacts.

Please notify the ECE immediately if your child becomes exposed to or contracts a communicable disease (e.g., chicken pox, mumps, measles, lice, pertussis).

Illness Prevention

Please use the following guidelines to help us prevent the spread of illness in our preschool. Please keep your child home for the following conditions:

- Pain (e.g., complaining of pain that is unexplained or undiagnosed)
- An acute cold with fever, coughing and/or sore throat.
- Difficulty breathing (e.g., wheezing or persistent cough)
- Fever (100° F or 38.3° C) .
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing.
- Infected skin or eyes
- Undiagnosed rash
- Headache and stiff neck
- Unexplained diarrhea (especially combined with nausea, vomiting, and/or abdominal cramps)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Severe itching of body or scalp
- Children with known or suspected communicable diseases
- If your child is not feeling well enough to take part in the full program (including the outdoor portion). If your child requires medication such as Advil/Tylenol in order to feel up to the program, it is typically better to keep them at home.

Children may attend school after being symptom-free from fever/vomiting/diarrhea for 24 hours.

Food Allergies

Children's food allergies will be posted in the classroom. They are also listed on the vestry bulletin board and in the first aid kits.

First Aid

All staff have been trained to perform first aid should it be required for the children or parents. If your child has received first aid, you will be notified immediately to ensure you do not want further follow up to occur. A first-aid kit is located by the main entrance in the window, by the exit to the children's playground, and by the utility room. When the school is put away, the first-aid kits are placed in the vestry. The ECE will take a first-aid kit on all field trips. The first-aid kits are updated as needed by Alert First Aid or appropriate substitute.

Injury

In the event of a serious injury, the ECE will accompany the child to the hospital. Every attempt will be made to notify the parents or designated contact people. Parents are required to fill out a Vital Information form with emergency phone numbers, physician's telephone number, and medical numbers for both the child and the participating person. The Parent Participation Agreement also requires you to indicate that you are aware of this policy.

Bathroom Procedure

Only ECE's, ECE assistants and child support workers (all paid staff with extra training) assist children in the bathrooms. Parent helpers do not assist children in the bathrooms. Personal body care is the child's responsibility, so practice this at home to assist your child to be independent and comfortable in this situation.

When children are in the process of learning self-toileting, staff will change diapers or pull-ups as needed. Please be sure to send your child in diapers or pull-ups that have pull-away tabs.

Volunteering Opportunities

A strong sense of community is the signature of Countryside. Unlike many other preschools, we encourage family to be involved in school on a variety of levels. These positions are completely voluntary and have no mandatory time commitments. Note: people volunteering for more than 2 days during the school year are required to submit a vulnerable sector criminal record check (no charge for volunteers or parent-participation).

Classroom helpers

There are many ways to help in the classroom! For example, helpers could assist in preparing play dough, craft projects, decorative themes for classroom, felt boards, or art prep. Assistance is always appreciated for cleaning, vacuuming, sweeping, wiping, and much more!

Set-up and push-backs

Volunteers are always appreciated for assisting the ECE in resetting the classroom after push-backs. The time for these set-ups is TBA depending on availability of the ECE and volunteers. In addition, we always welcome extra hands in the Thursday push-backs.

Parent-Participation Stream

A unique aspect of Countryside is the opportunity to participate in the running of the preschool. This registration stream is ideal for parents looking for ways to be involved in their children's education while enjoying reduced rates. Parent participants hold one job per family. The preschool strives to match jobs with the skills, interests, and preferences of families. While the school makes every attempt to match available jobs with family requests, it cannot guarantee all requests.

Board Meetings

Monthly board meetings are held on the first Wednesday evening of each month during the school year. Meetings take place at 7:00pm at Countryside unless otherwise arranged.

Annual General Meeting

As a non-profit society, Countryside hold an annual general meeting the first Wednesday of each year. All Countryside members have voting privileges at this meeting and are encouraged to attend. Tuition fees are evaluated and changes approved. Board members are nominated and voted in at this yearly meeting.

Cleaning

All parent-participation families share in the cleaning duties of the preschool. Cleaning dates will be organized throughout the year for sanitizing toys/equipment and cleaning carpets. Some of the duties may be delegated as a parent-participation job pending enrollment.

Fundraising

Being a non-profit organization, "FUN-draising" is vital to meeting a budget each school year. Under the direction of the Fundraising Committee, all parent-participation members participate in a number of events throughout the year.

Some fundraisers are "passive" and do not require people to send extra funds. Rather, the preschool benefits from purchases that members would ordinarily make. This includes a membership number for Co-op fuel, Thrifty Foods smile cards, and Mabel's Labels.

Other programs are more "active" and are ideal for requesting support from friends or family. These include Scholastic program for book purchases, Vesey's program for ordering flower bulbs, and Purdy's Chocolates. It is not the expectation that members fund these efforts personally. Rather, the preschool encourages its members to request support from the community.

Other events are open and advertised to the wider community. These include Paint Nite and the annual silent auction. All parent-participation families are required to assist in seeking donation requests from donors (e.g. local businesses) for items to put in the silent auction.

The Executive Officers of the Board

Board members (also known as the Executive) are voted upon in May and work year-long terms starting in June. Officers of the board include President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Fundraising Chair. They are responsible for overseeing the business of the preschool. The preschool cannot remain open unless the duties of the board are covered by preschool members. As these positions are filled yearly, the individuals may be new to their duties. Your understanding and encouragement goes a long way in helping the board grow in their positions as they support the school. The positions are as follows:

President

The chief executive officer and spokesperson for the preschool. Presides at all meetings. The President is a member of the Budget Committee, and is an *ex-officio* member of all other committees. The president handles marketing of the preschool. The president oversees the running of the preschool but ensures delegation of tasks to all parent-participation members.

Vice President

Assists the president and assumes presidential duties in her or his absence. Chairs the Personnel Committee. May chair other committees such as the Hiring Committee, Standards Committee and Constitution, Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee. Negotiates the ECE's contract and acts as liaison with the landlord. Oversees insurance/liability coverage.

Treasurer

Pays all ordinary accounts and extraordinary accounts on approval of the Executive. Gives monthly financial reports including presentation of the Balance Sheet, Income Statement (as prepared by the bookkeeper) and comparison to the approved budget. Chairs the Budget Committee. School liaison to the bookkeeper.

Secretary (enrollment assistant)

Records minutes of all executive and general meetings, and takes attendance at meetings. Keeps all preschool records other than financial and maintains adequate records of membership. May chair the Constitution, Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee. Assists the ECE in preparing enrollment packages.

Fundraising Chair

Arranges suitable fundraising activities throughout the year as deemed necessary by the membership to meet the fundraising target. Oversees the annual silent auction, including delegation of donation requests to parent-participation members.

Non-Board Positions

The following are current non-board positions for parent-participation families. Jobs subject to change depending on enrollment. Regardless of how jobs are delegated and/or distributed, all duties of both board and non-board positions must be met in order for the preschool to run.

Maintenance

Promptly repairs and maintains all preschool equipment. This may include keeping a log of repairs (kept at the school). Maintains equipment personally or enlists professional help when necessary (budget pending approval from the board). Arranges the purchase of equipment in consultation with the ECE and in accordance with the priorities of the board. Performs equipment inventory as requested. Responsible for outdoor playground maintenance (leaf raking, weed/snow removal, removal of hazards such as broken glass, etc.) and recruits volunteers for summer gardening and fall cleanup. Responsible for maintaining the earthquake kit in consultation with the ECE.

Cleaning

Does weekly laundry for the preschool, as arranged with the ECE and current needs of the school. Laundry schedule may include picking up dirty laundry on Thursdays, and returning clean laundry on Tuesday mornings. Responsible for organizing the school cleaning days during the year (dates to be arranged in conjunction with the ECE/board). May perform other cleaning tasks as requested by the ECE.

Thursday helpers

This position involves 1-2 hours of duties, typically twice monthly. Duties can include (but are not limited to) cleaning art supplies, sanitizing toys, vacuuming carpets, emptying garbage/recycling bins, and assisting with push-backs. This position is shared between at least two families.

Safety Policies

Policy against bullying/harassment

Countryside has policies in place to address any allegations of bullying/harassment between members and/or staff. If concerns arise during the school year, anyone concerned can approach a member of the board or a designated neutral party to discuss situations of witnessed or perceived bullying/harassment. All members are required to agree and sign with this policy when joining Countryside Preschool.

Reporting Child Abuse

The Child, Family and Community Services Act of British Columbia outlines a person's responsibility in reporting child abuse. *The act requires that any person who has reason to believe that a child has been, or is likely to be, neglected or physically, sexually or emotionally abused has a duty to report those suspicions to a child protection social worker at their local Ministry.* It is then the responsibility of the child protection social worker to determine the validity of the report and to conduct any subsequent investigation. It is also the social worker's responsibility to contact the child's parents and/or the alleged perpetrator.

The implications of this act in the preschool setting are that the ECE, or any parent, who suspects abuse or neglect, is required by law to report. Once a report is made, the matter is out of the hands of person making the report. The ECE or reporting parent is not responsible for talking to the parent of the child. The information is confidential and should not be shared with other preschool members. The appropriate Ministry office is the Ministry of Children and Families (or equivalent) or a call can be made to the HelpLine for Children: (250) 310-1234.

Insurance

Each child registered in the school is covered by insurance under a policy which is purchased and held by the preschool. Please note that, although the ECE and the participating parents are covered by this policy while on the school premises, siblings are not covered at any time. Parents who participate by driving children to and from a field trip are covered in case of an accident *firstly* by their own automobile insurance.

Procedure for serious injury

In case of injury during preschool sessions, the ECE will apply immediate first aid. If assisting or volunteering at the school, please familiarize yourself with the location of the first aid kit. Staff will call will phone parents/alternative pick-up persons to collect remaining children and then close preschool asif soon as possible.

Please note: ECE will accompany child to the hospital if the parent/guardian is unavailable.

Fire

If you are the first to spot a fire that cannot be put out with fire extinguisher, pull the fire alarm and call 911. When the bell sounds, the ECE leads the children outside. Staff checks the preschool areas and closes any open doors after children leave. The ECE is responsible for roll call. Please note exits and fire extinguishers if assisting or volunteering at the preschool. Currently the fire extinguisher is located by the front door. There are three main exits:

- the main entrance;
- the door to the playground; and

- the door by the utility room.

Earthquake

A major earthquake may hit while your child is in preschool. As responsible adults we need to be as informed and prepared as possible for such an emergency. At preschool, all adults and children are to wear indoor shoes (not slippers) to enable us to go outside quickly and protect feet from glass or keep them protected from the weather.

The preschool is equipped with an earthquake pack and an earthquake kit containing tools, water, some food (enough for one or two snacks), and other emergency items. It is stored in the outside shed.

The ECE is the adult in charge in any emergency and makes all final decisions. If the ECE is absent, then the substitute ECE takes this role and responsibility. If an emergency such as an earthquake were to occur, staff must stay until all children are picked up, no exceptions.