

Welcome to the MFRC's Preschool Program



Parent Handbook

*Colwood Pacific Activity Centre
2610 Rosebank Road (250)363-2640*

Welcome

The MFRC's Preschool program has been open since 1996. We serve children and families of full-time Canadian Armed Forces members living in the Victoria area. Our program is licensed through Island Health and we offer a preschool environment that focusses on appropriate activities, outdoor play and preschool programming.

Vision Statement

Our vision statement is to provide a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive environment where children grow and explore while families feel appreciated and supported within the military community.

Philosophy

The MFRC's Preschool Program is based on providing a child-centered approach to care, taking individual needs of each child and family into account.

All educators will promote a partnership between educators and parents to ensure consistent and respectful care for your child. Each educator will work with you to ensure consistent care for your child and to build a trusting, reciprocal relationship with you that is based on open communication. Our objectives are to assist children to develop at their own rate in a safe, nurturing, supportive and respectful environment.

Additionally, care will be provided that is age appropriate and play based across various environments that stimulate curiosity, independence and positive emotional and social development.

We believe that all behaviors present an opportunity to learn. Very young children need guidance in learning socially acceptable behavior. We try to use each situation to explain feelings, encourage empathy and model alternate solutions. By setting clear and consistent limits, following through, intercepting inappropriate behavior, and explaining the reasons for the limits, we work with the children to gain confidence and learn to acquire social problem solving skills.

The program has an open door policy, which means parents/guardians are welcome to visit any time of the day. When visiting your child, we encourage you to participate in your child's care, routine and activities. All educators deliver programming that encompasses best practices found within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sector and provide individual and flexible care as needed. Also, all staff are familiar with implementing additional supports when required regarding lifestyle challenges such as deployment and relocation.

We pride ourselves on providing a diverse and inclusive setting. ***All children are welcome in various activities and care options are available in our Children's services program.*** Activities and programs provided to our community will strive to include all children to participate to their fullest extent. *(Please see Inclusion Statement below)*

Operational Procedures & Guidelines

Hours of Operation

The Preschool Programs are either twice or three times a week for 2 ½ hours per session, except for statutory holidays and Professional Development Days. The 2-day/week Preschool, which happens on Monday & Wednesday afternoons 1:00-3:30, is designed for children turning 3 years of age in the current calendar year. The 3-day/week Preschool, which happens on Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning 9:00-11:30, is designed for children turning 4 years of age in the current calendar year, children heading to Kindergarten the following year.

Please note that for both Preschools we require the children to be fully potty trained.

We would appreciate a phone call if your child will be late. Educators must be notified if a child is going to be absent and also if the reason for the absence is health related.

Orientation

The week prior to the start of the academic year, a “meet the teacher” opportunity will be available for all parents. This is a drop in session; no appointment is required. These are usually scheduled during the regular class time. Each year a list of Key Dates will be provided for all Children's Services programs.

Educators / Shifts

We have chosen to limit the classes to 10 students; therefore there is only one Educator who is responsible for the well-being of the children, the children's program, and educator/parent communications. Please respect the scheduled class times. Educators are required to do their own program set-up and clean-up, and therefore are not available to supervise children before or after class times. The emphasis is on a group program, while taking into consideration each child's individuality. It is important to maintain consistent routines for the group in order for the children to feel safe and secure.

Parents will be informed if it is necessary to engage a substitute Educator if the regular Educator will be absent for more than two consecutive weeks. Substitutes will be used (depending on availability) when regular Educators are off due to holidays, illness or bereavement. Practicum students are not permitted to care for your child while unsupervised.

From time to time, practicum students, volunteers and substitutes will be involved in your child's program. Parents are encouraged to consult with the Educators in the program if any questions or concerns arise regarding these staff persons.

Daily Arrival and Departure

It is the responsibility of the parent to sign their child in and out of the Preschool each day. This is set up for the safety of the children and is also a Licensing requirement. Good-byes need to be exchanged inside the Child Care areas.

The sign in/out sheet is used as an attendance record in emergency situations and to plan staffing needs.

Only those persons whose names appear on the registration form or the alternate contact list may pick up children from the Centre. Parents may, however notify the Educators of any changes. All persons, other than the parents, must provide identification upon picking up a child. The child's parents must document the change on the sign in/out sheet provided, and inform the Educator.

Things to Check Daily

Parent Information Board and Calendar: These are set up in the playroom. Up and coming events and issues you should know about would be posted in one of these areas.

Parent File: If there are receipts, notices or letters that need to be read, they will be located near the sign in book or in to your child's cupboard.

Art File: Your child's artwork will be placed in their cupboards or a specified drying area. Please make sure to pick up artwork on a regular basis as the Pre-School rooms are utilized by several classes and other programs.

Clothing and Items Needed for Pre-School

Please label everything you send with your child.

Parents should provide a small snack and drink for their child. Please inform the Educators of any food allergies. If a child has any food allergies, the educators must be notified in writing, including the symptoms resulting from the allergy and the remedies and precautions that need to be taken.

The Pre-School program includes outside play in most weather conditions in addition to indoor play. Please ensure your child has the following items at the Centre:

- Muddy buddy or rain gear

- Boots
- Winter hat and sun hat
- A change of clothing (including socks)
- Up to date picture of your child

We ask that you send your child in comfortable, washable clothing, as we get very busy and messy while exploring our environment.

Play Items from home

We kindly ask parents/guardians to assist their children with keeping toys and other personal items at home. In our experience toys become lost or have the potential to cause conflicts among children.

Toilet Training

Due to the educator to child ratio and programming in a preschool setting, all children are required to be fully toilet trained. If there are medical or other extenuating circumstances, please discuss this with the Children's Services Coordinator.

Parent Participation

Parents are welcome to request meetings during the year in order to request information regarding:

- Educators, volunteers, and practicum students
- Updates on programs, and regulations
- Policies and issues of concern to parents
- Work of educators, volunteers, and parents in the care of the children and support of the program

Field Trips and Special Activities

Field trips are an integral part of the program. However, in our efforts to minimize risks, we require parents or caregivers to be present and participate in all field trips.

Additional fees may be requested to assist with payment of admission fees or for special occasion activities. We will endeavour to keep these additional fees to a minimum. However, for some circumstances, we hope that you can understand that if the entire class is unable to participate, then special trips or activities will have to be cancelled. We may need to ask parents to keep their children from the program if they are unable to participate for any reason.

Absence

Please inform the Educator by 9:00 a.m. if your child will not be attending the centre on a particular day. It would also be appreciated if the date of return and reason for an absence, especially if health related, are given.

Late Pick-up Fees Policy

Parents/guardians agree to pay a late charge of \$15.00 per hour, or part thereof, after the scheduled closing of the preschool should they arrive late when picking up their child. (In determining the correct time, the Educator on duty will go by the clock in the room). Parents/guardians are responsible for making alternate arrangements for someone to pick up your child if you are late.

If your child is registered in an on-going program for which you pay fees on a monthly basis, you may add the late fee to your next payment.

Should a parent not inform us of alternate arrangements being made the staff procedure is as follows:

1. Fifteen (15) minutes following the close of a program, educators will try to reach the parents/guardians at all provided phone numbers.
2. If unable to reach a parent, then those authorized on the registration form as an "Alternate Pick-up" will be called. A message will be left for the parent at the home phone number regarding what arrangements have been made.
3. If unable to reach an authorized "Alternate Pick-up", then those listed "In Case Of Emergency" will be called. A message will be left for the parent at the home phone number regarding what arrangements have been made.
4. One (1) hour following the closure of the preschool, if parents/guardians have not made contact and an alternate or emergency pick-up has not been arranged, educator will contact their immediate supervisor who will contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). A message will be left for parents/guardians at their home phone number regarding what arrangements have been made. During office hours (8:30 – 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday) , parents/guardians may contact the local MCFD office located at the:

West Shore Family Services 2nd Floor, 345 Wale Road, Victoria, BC
V9B 6X2 250- 391-2223. To contact MCFD's emergency and after office (hours), call the 24 hour line at 1-800-663-9122

5. MFRC Staff and all citizens have a legal, **Duty to Report** suspected child abuse, neglect or any concern about a child's safety and wellbeing to MCFD as stipulated in the Child, Family and Community Service Act. *See Staff Qualifications section for additional information regarding Duty to Report and Child welfare concerns.*

Financial

A \$20 non-refundable registration fee is due at time of enrolment. This non-refundable fee covers administration costs only. This charge does not go towards the first month childcare fees. A non-refundable deposit of ½ of one month's fees is required at the time of signing the contract.

Child care is offered by the calendar month, beginning on the first day of each month. The current monthly fee is based on 9 hours child care per day.

Fees are due in full and in advance by the first of every month. Please note that there may be changes in fees from time to time with due notice. The MFRC agrees to give six weeks' notice of any fee changes.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that all subsidy authorizations are in place prior to enrolment and all approval forms are placed in your child's file. If subsidized, the parent agrees to pay the full amount of childcare fees when the subsidy expires. The parent portion of fees is required in full and by the first of every month.

In order to maintain a child care space, full monthly fees must be paid for any period of time when children are away from the centre, including vacation, statutory holidays, sickness or other absence. No refunds will be given for these absences. The parent/guardian is not permitted to sublet their child's position for any reason.

Failure to pay childcare fees by the 1st day of the month or make alternate payment arrangements with the Office Administrator may result in a notice of a cancellation of childcare services provided by the MFRC.

Parents/guardians agree to give one calendar months' notice, in writing, to the MFRC by the last day of the month, one month prior to leaving. For example, notice by March 31st for May 1st. Licensing regulations with Island Health, requires that your child withdraw from preschool when they have reached the licensed group-care age maximum for this centre.

The MFRC will give six weeks written notice to parents/guardians if we are no longer able to provide services to your child(ren).

All fees paid to the MFRC are tax deductible. *Please ensure that you keep your receipts as there is a charge to reprint receipts.*

Health Policy

There are many factors involved in ensuring a child's optimum growth and development; good health is a particularly important one. Children who are ill require a relaxed atmosphere and more individual attention than the Centre can provide.

When choosing preschool program, parents/guardians must realize they will be restricted in the use of the preschool if their child is sick. In a child care setting, illnesses travel fast. If your child is sick or not feeling well, please refrain from bringing him/her to preschool until they are well again. Keep in mind the children attending preschool are expected to participate in a variety of play experiences.

It is understood that keeping a sick child home can mean a parent might miss valuable work hours. Please consider what your options are for alternate care if it is difficult for you to leave your work.

If a child requires medication to be administered, *Permission to Administer Medication* form will be provided whereby written authorization must be given by a parent/guardian. This permits and provides the educators the necessary information to administer any medication. Educators will only dispense medication(s) listed on this form which is to be filled out completely and precisely. An educator will insist that you get your physician's approval:

- if you wish the dosage to be given to your child is different than the one indicated on the package, or
- if there is a concern about the number of consecutive days and times your child receives a particular medication.

We must ensure that all precautions are taken with the children in our care.

If your child becomes ill during the day, we will contact either parent/guardian right away. If we cannot reach you, the alternate person(s) on the registration form will be contacted to ensure that your child receives prompt, appropriate medical attention.

Educators have the right to refuse admission to a child who appears to be too ill to attend preschool. If your child cannot participate in our daily program (i.e. outside play, group activities etc.) then he/she is not permitted at preschool. We ask you to respect the educator's decision when asked to pick up your child due to illness. Our concern is to provide a healthy, safe environment for all children to enjoy.

Please note, the criteria for exclusion listed on the following page are recommended by the Vancouver Island Health Authority. These criteria may differ in some respects from your physician's opinion, primarily because these criteria are designed for children participating in group care.

CONDITIONS FOR CHILDREN TO BE EXCLUDED FROM PRESCHOOL

- **Acute cold:** Contagious with obvious discharge of infected green, yellow or reddish brown mucus – return when discharge has subsided.
- **Cough:** 3-5 times per hour, and especially if choking and/or vomiting accompanies the cough. Child may return when coughing has subsided.
- **Fever:** 38⁰C (100.4F) or over – may return when fever has remained at 37⁰ (98.6F) for 24 hours without the aid of medication, and the child has not developed a secondary infection.
- **Vomiting:** Return after 24 hours of last bout of sickness.
- **Diarrhea:** Must be symptom free for 24 hours and have had one solid bowel movement.
- **Antibiotic:** Return after 24 hours since first taken.
- **Infected skin or eyes:** A doctor must examine undiagnosed skin irritations, and medical clearance for return is obtained. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is very contagious and must be treated and eyes clear before the child may return.
- **Ear aches and Infections:** Because VIHA says untreated ear infections can lead to hearing loss and are potentially infectious, we require children to see a Doctor for direction and ask that children stay home for a minimum of 24 hours with or without antibiotic medication. This allows for the children to be monitored and assessed. Children may return when symptoms such as fever and ear tugging have subsided.
- **Lice:** A child may return once he/she has been treated with an effective treatment and **all lice and nits** have been combed or picked out of hair. Follow up shampooing must be administered to complete treatment.
- **Communicable Diseases:** Communicable diseases such as chicken pox and measles must be reported to the Educators as soon as they are diagnosed. The duration of the child's treatment and exclusion from preschool will depend on VIHA's Communicable Disease recommendations which Educator will be able to provide.

Allergies

Please inform the educators of any food allergies that your child has. Educators must be notified in writing if your child has food allergies including symptoms resulting from the allergy and any remedies and precautions that need to be taken.

Please note our policy regarding allergies which may restrict certain food products at the centre such as nuts and tree nuts. We will inform you if it is required for us to enforce that policy due to a child's severe allergy that could be life threatening including anaphylactic reactions.

Continuation to other MFRC Programs

You will be placed on our current waitlist for each program according to your child's age and we will only be able to confirm your registration if space is available in that program (i.e. from Preschool to Out of School Care).

Parents/guardians who wish their children to continue to the Out of School Care need to register for this program. A waitlist is kept and you will be informed where you are on this list and when a vacancy is available. Priority for enrollment is made according to the initial date your child enrolled with the MFRC child care programs.

Inclement Weather

Children will spend time outdoors daily and will participate in activities during sunny and rainy weather; appropriate clothing is greatly appreciated. Extreme weather conditions such as intense cold or heat will be monitored by educators and any necessary precautions taken (as directed by VIHA).

The Preschool will remain open during most periods of perceived inclement weather. Given the mild climate of Victoria it is unlikely that extreme weather/temperature fluctuations will occur. However, in the event of extreme weather conditions, the MFRC and CFB Esquimalt reserve the right to close the MFRC programs, including the Preschool. Every effort will be made to contact parents/guardians.

Emergency Procedures

Child Care Licensing Regulations requires all licensed programs to post and practice monthly fire drills. These fire drills are posted in the Children's Services Coordinator's office.

In case of an emergency such as a fire or earthquake, children will be evacuated from the program and parents/guardians will be contacted. If practical, the children will remain as

close to the centre as possible for a maximum of two hours as parents would most naturally come straight to the MFRC. After the 2-hour period, the staff will bring the children to the nearest Community Emergency Centre (CEC), please listen to the local radio station (CFAX-1070) to find out the location of the closest CEC, e.g. Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre). Please Note: The MFRC's emergency plan may be changed as the situation develops. Every possible effort will be made to properly inform parents of where they can pick up their child if plans change due to uncontrollable circumstances.

If it is not possible to leave the building, all staff will assist the children in any manner required, for example administering first aid, providing comfort or emotional support during an emergency.

Base Emergencies

Parents/guardians should be aware that if there is a base emergency, the Department of National Defence (DND) has priority over the building and may need access to the CPAC location and its amenities. It is possible during such emergencies that all operations and programs will temporarily close until further notice and clearance given by the base. Every effort will be made to contact parents/guardians of a closure at CPAC or a cessation of programs such as the child care centre(s).

Staff Qualifications and Philosophy Statements

Staff Qualifications

All educators, including the Child Care Supervisor, have post-secondary training in Early Childhood Education and must certify periodically with MCFD's Early Childhood Educator Registry. Additionally, all educators have current First Aid and CPR training and have completed a Criminal Record Check. The Children's Services Coordinator and Child Care Supervisor have additional skills and educational requirements.

Military Lifestyle Awareness

All educators are familiar with unique aspects associated with the military lifestyle, for example, deployment and relocation, and how these features can affect our children and families. At the time of hire, all educators are expected to review the on-line tool "Caring for the Military Child". This is an interactive presentation designed to give educators tools information to help children from military families cope with unique lifestyle challenges, such as deployment and relocation.

Parents/guardians who are experiencing deployment may also find the MFRC's deployment workshops for children useful during these times of transition. Please speak with an educator or the supervisor to obtain additional information.

Practicum Students, Volunteers and Substitute Educators

Occasionally, practicum students, volunteers and substitute educators will be involved in your child's program. Parents/guardians are encouraged to consult with the regular classroom educators if any questions or concerns arise regarding students or temporary staffing.

Parents/guardians will be informed as necessary when a substitute educator is employed when a regular educator is absent for more than two consecutive weeks. Additionally, substitute educators will also be employed when a regular staff member is unavailable due to holidays, illness or bereavement.

Practicum students and volunteers are never unsupervised with the children in our programs and are not counted in our staffing to child ratios of care. Completed criminal record checks are also required by students and volunteers.

All educators are familiar with circumstances that require them to report child abuse, neglect or any concerns about a child's safety and well-being as mandated by law. Staff or parents who have additional child welfare concerns should download or obtain a copy of *BC's Responding to Child Welfare Concerns. Your Role in Knowing When and What to Report and the Child, Family and Community Service Act of BC.*

Additionally, staff or concerned citizens can contact the **Children's Helpline at 310-1234**, (no area code required) regarding suspected child abuse, neglect or if a child's safety appears compromised.

Nutrition Statement

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing a nutritious snack for their child. The only beverage we will provide is water.

We strongly believe in a well-balanced, nutritious lifestyle and encourage families to do the same. Please ensure that your child has healthy food and drink according to *Canada's Food Guide*, which promotes healthy eating and nutritional habits. Please ensure that your child has sufficient quantity and quality of food and drink to meet the developmental needs regarding a child's age, the number of hours the child is in care and the child's food preferences and cultural background. We also strongly believe and support a child's choice in determining what they eat. If you need any suggestions regarding these guidelines, our educators can help you with choosing healthy options.

Regarding special occasions such as birthdays or holidays, please check with the child care supervisor or an educator about some ideas and options to promote healthy eating habits for special days.

Please note: Do not send hard candy, gum, nuts, tree nuts, potato chips or chocolate bars to preschool. Some of these items are also choking hazards.

Communication with Families

We strive to build strong, respectful and reciprocal relationships through open communication with our families. These relationships are maintained and enhanced as required and begin with informal conversations daily about the well-being of your child, within a private milieu, for example, outside his/her hearing. Other mediums of communication are used as necessary, for example, telephone, email or a scheduled meeting with the coordinator and or supervisor. To assist the educators with providing the optimum support needed, informing the educators of any changes at home, for example, deployment will provide us with information to modify a child's programming at the centre.

It is not uncommon for 3 to 5 year olds to occasionally be limited in various developmental skills. If parents /guardians are concerned about their child's development, records can be kept to reference so you may know how your child's day went. These records can include, for example verbal skills, nutrition intake, sunscreen application, toileting, and general observations. Please make a request to one of the educators.

Guidance and Discipline

Guidance and discipline are always approached positively and respectfully at the centre. Any interventions implemented, whether formal or informal, take into account opportunities for children to learn self-regulation skills, are age appropriate and promote supportive problem solving skills. All supports cultivate nurturing, responsive behaviour change through conversation, modelling and providing positive feedback and reinforcement.

Additionally, our educators use suggestions associated with the Positive Behavior Support Teaching Pyramid or PBS as recommended by VIHA's Supported Child Development. All educators receive training in PBS methods and are expected to implement these strategies when assisting children with overcoming difficulties or modifying behaviors. Underlining principles of PBS support ideas that educators need to understand "why" a child presents with challenging behavior and learns to focus on teaching new skills to reduce or replace undesirable behaviours.

All supports associated with any concepts pertaining to guidance and discipline must be in keeping with requirements and principles associated with the Child Care Licensing Regulations and the BC Child Care Act. The safety and well-being of children receiving care is of paramount importance.

In addition, the MFRC has the following Policies:

- Children in care occasionally require individualized, behaviour management supports that meet a child's unique needs.
- Educators will use positive methods and approaches to managing behaviour. Some strategies typically include: setting clear and direct limits, using redirection, acknowledging feelings and encouraging children to "use their words".
- The MFRC does not permit the use of physical, emotional or psychological punishment of any child and will not tolerate a parent who chooses these approaches in our setting.
- Occasionally, parents/guardians will be asked to sign incident reports when they occur.

For any child requiring additional behavior management or positive supports, educators will request a meeting with parents/guardians to find solutions that are created collaboratively. A Child Care Plan must also be drafted listing goals with interventions required to assist a child who requires additional supports. This document is required by Licensing. Suggestions for community resources can also be made as needed.

Inclusion Statement

The MFRC Preschool accepts and welcomes children of all abilities. Our educators recognize that all children may have unique, cultural or special needs. We believe that all individuals deserve an environment and experiences that promote growth in all areas of their development. Using a strength-based approach, our programs and services endeavor to provide for the inclusion of individuals who require additional support because of a physical, cognitive, social or emotional need.

Educators at the MFRC child care programs strive to accommodate needs and promote an inclusive environment. The extent to which we can support specialized inclusive care in our licensed programs is dependent upon the situation, our resources, staffing, training and community partnerships.

Upon enrollment, if known, please inform the Children's Coordinator or another designated staff of your child's specific, extra needs or an actual diagnosis if determined by health officials. The staff will assist you with developing a developmental or individual plan specific to support any required needs. This document is also required by licensing officers as delegated in the Child Care Licensing Regulations.

Why we play! Activities and Outdoor Play

Children benefit greatly from time spent outdoors and we provide opportunities for this each day. Outdoor play offers children unique opportunities for learning about various activities and the environment that cannot always be obtained from being indoors.

Additionally outdoor play enhances gross motor play that is part of promoting healthy body development and coordination. Outdoor play may also involve “getting dirty or a bit wet” please provide appropriate clothing for this.

The 3 to 5 year olds have a separate playground from the younger children in order to provide a safe and stimulating, age appropriate environment. Activities and outdoor equipment is rotated and adjusted by theme or season.

Physical Environment

The physical, indoor environment is typically made up of the classroom and a gym. The majority of time is spent in the classroom given activities found within this environment supports many of the typical learning and play development of a 3 to 5 year old. Activities and educational materials support many developmental areas associated with cognitive, fine motor, emotional and daily life skills. All activities offered promote positive peer interactions and individual skills that are educator directed and occur during free play.

Kindergarten Readiness

Our educators are mindful of supporting children with entering kindergarten in the regular school system. Many of the preschool activities available in the child care setting support and encourage curiosity, problem solving, peer development and self-regulation skills. These developmental attributes encourage and are required for more formalized or academic learning in a public school environment.

The educators or Child Care Supervisor will discuss any concerns you may have or direct you to other community supports if you feel are required. Additionally, our educators can discuss with you typical milestones associated with 3 to 5 year olds.

Your Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our programs and services and will ask for your support during our formal evaluation processes throughout the year. We also appreciate any informal and constructive feedback you would like to offer to the Preschool Educator or Children’s Services Coordinator.

Formal Evaluation

You will be invited to participate in the Family Resource Program online survey on an annual basis. Additionally, a meeting between you and your child’s educator will be scheduled to give you the opportunity to learn more about your child’s care and provide us with input.