



## HELIC Handbook: Key Policy Excerpts



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### **Welcome to the Highlands Early Learning Centre!**

This document contains important excerpts from the HELC Handbook to help families navigate key routines, approaches, and guidelines. By becoming familiar with these highlights, we can work together to create a supportive and enriching preschool experience for your child.

**Please note:** This document provides selected policies for your convenience. Registered families will have access to the complete HELC Handbook once they sign up on Kindertales. For any additional questions, please contact the preschool office.

*At Highlands Early Learning Centre, our vision is to foster an inclusive preschool community that honours each child's individuality and celebrates exceptional teachers who inspire a passion for learning.*

Last Updated: December 3, 2024

## **Section 1 – General Overview**

### **HEL C Preschool Information**

Highlands Early Learning Centre (formerly known as Highlands Preschool) has been serving the needs of North Shore children for over 50 years. Since 1973, it has operated in its current facilities and built a strong reputation in the community for quality early childhood education. Each year, we work with approximately 110 children aged two to five, offering 13 different classes during either morning or afternoon sessions. The preschool is often filled with the happy sounds of children playing and discovering new things in the classroom, the gym, or outside on the playground.

Highlands Early Learning Centre (HEL C) is a licensed, registered non-profit society, and registered charity (BN/Tax # 107 48 20 RR0001). HEL C rents its space from Highlands United Church; however, we operate independently and are not affiliated with the church's religion. As a non-denominational preschool, we welcome families from all backgrounds and beliefs.

The HEL C preschool is overseen by a volunteer parent Board of Directors, which is responsible for the preschool's strategic direction, and administered by a paid Executive Director, who handles all operational matters with support from Board members as needed.

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held each June and is open to all registered families. For more information about our Strategic Plan, values, and other details, visit our website: [www.highlandsELC.ca](http://www.highlandsELC.ca).

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### **Important Dates**

- HEL C follows the holiday closures of the North Vancouver School District (School District 44), including all statutory holidays and school breaks.
- To view the latest preschool calendar, visit the HEL C website and go to the “**Current Families**” tab.



## **Section 3 - Gradual Entry**

The gradual entry period is a crucial phase that helps children and families transition smoothly into the preschool environment. This process fosters a sense of security, trust, and belonging, setting the foundation for a positive and enriching preschool experience. Our dedicated staff is committed to making this transition as seamless and supportive as possible.

### **Purpose**

Starting preschool is a big milestone! Our gradual entry process is thoughtfully designed to ease the separation process for children and families, ensuring every child transitions successfully, no matter their start date.

### **How Gradual Entry Works at HELC**

- 1. Welcome to the Classroom**

Children are introduced to their classroom, classmates, and routines, with clear expectations gently communicated by our teachers.

- 2. Shorter Days at First**

The first few days feature shorter sessions, gradually extending as children adjust. Smaller initial class sizes ensure a calm, supportive environment.

- 3. Building Relationships**

The shorter sessions allow teachers to connect meaningfully with each child, fostering trust, comfort, and familiarity.

- 4. Parent Participation**

Your presence may be requested during this period to help your child build a positive attachment to their teachers and the new environment.

- 5. Gradual Entry Schedules**

Each class will receive a detailed gradual entry schedule outlining the progression of days and timings. This will give you a clear understanding of how your child's transition will unfold.



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### **Flexible Transition Plans**

We recognize that every child adjusts at their own pace. If your child needs extra time beyond the initial two weeks, our teachers will work with you to create an individualized plan to support their transition.

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### **Supporting Separation Anxiety**

It's normal for young children to experience some separation anxiety. Here's how we help (and how you can, too):

- 1. Prepare Together**

Read books about going to preschool or role-play as teacher and student to create excitement.



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### 2. **Keep Goodbyes Short**

A confident, upbeat goodbye reassures your child they're in a safe and happy place. Let them know you'll be back soon.

### 3. **Talk About Feelings**

Listen to your child's thoughts and validate their emotions. Let them know it's okay to feel both excited and nervous.

### 4. **Stick to a Routine**

Consistency helps reduce anxiety. Drop-off and pick-up routines provide children with stability and predictability.

### 5. **Stay in Touch**

Connect with teachers for updates and insights into your child's adjustment.

### 6. **Encourage Independence**

Involve your child in preparing for preschool—packing their backpack or picking a snack—so they feel more confident and involved.

### 7. **Be Patient**

Some children adapt quickly, while others may take more time. Celebrate small victories and let your child adjust at their own pace.

Remember, you're not alone in this journey! The Highlands Early Learning Centre team is here to support you and your child every step of the way. Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. Together, we'll create a foundation for a joyful preschool experience.



## **Section 6 – Guiding Early Learners: HELC Curriculum**

At Highlands Early Learning Centre, our curriculum is designed to nurture early childhood experiences that empower children to explore and understand their world. This approach fosters independence, responsibility, confidence, and effective communication, laying a strong foundation for lifelong success.

Inspired by the **Early Learning Framework**—developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Children and Family Development—our curriculum emphasizes learning through play. Play is central to holistic development, supporting both physical and intellectual growth while fostering essential life skills.

The **Early Learning Framework** highlights "windows of opportunity" in early childhood, periods when children are especially receptive to new experiences. At HELC, our mission is to make the most of these formative years, igniting a lifelong love of learning.

Our curriculum supports development in four essential domains:

- **Well-Being and Belonging:** Fostering a sense of well-being and creating a strong feeling of belonging.
- **Exploration of Others, Materials, and the World:** Encouraging curiosity about people, objects, and the environment.
- **Communication and Literacies:** Developing language, communication skills, and foundational literacies.
- **Identities, Social Responsibility, and Diversity:** Cultivating self-awareness, social responsibility, and an appreciation for diversity.

By embracing these values, we create meaningful learning experiences that help children grow into well-rounded, curious individuals ready to engage with the world.

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### **A Day of Exploratory Learning**

Each day at HELC is filled with opportunities for children to follow their interests and explore various classroom areas. Here's a glimpse into our engaging learning spaces:

- **Open Art Area:** A vibrant space for creativity using various art materials. Smocks are available but play clothes and comfortable shoes are recommended for these imaginative, and sometimes messy, activities.
- **Block Area:** Featuring natural blocks and construction materials, this area encourages teamwork and problem-solving as children build structures and incorporate props like cars, animals, and more.
- **Reading Oasis:** A calming nook for reading, drawing, or quiet reflection that supports language and literacy development.
- **Dramatic Play Zone:** A space where children can recreate real-world scenarios, fostering imagination and connection. Themes change monthly to reflect children's interests, from post offices to restaurants.
- **Science and Exploration Area:** A hands-on space for experimenting, observing, and discovering the natural world, cultivating a love for science and critical thinking.
- **Sensory Play Zone:** Sensory bins and materials engage the senses, allowing children to learn through touch, sound, sight, and more.

- **Quiet Reflection Space:** A cozy retreat for children needing a calm moment, whether for reading or quiet activities.
- **Outdoor Adventures:** Daily outdoor play in our natural playground or gym supports gross motor development and teamwork. Please ensure children are dressed appropriately for the weather, as outdoor exploration is a vital part of our day.

These areas provide a rich tapestry of experiences that nurture curiosity, creativity, and collaboration—sowing the seeds for lifelong learning.

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### **Special Events and Field Trips**

Our program extends beyond the classroom, with special events and field trips designed to broaden children’s horizons and deepen their community connections. Activities include neighborhood walks, library visits, and guest interactions with community members and parents.

Off-site field trips provide unique learning opportunities. For these occasions, we may request parent volunteers or ask families to drop off and pick up children directly at the venue to maximize exploration time.

These thoughtfully planned events foster curiosity, community connections, and a sense of wonder, enriching your child's learning journey.

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### **Behaviour Guidance Policy**

At HELC, we adhere to the **Community Care Facility Act** and **Child Care Licensing Regulation Section 52**, strictly prohibiting any form of corporal punishment, degrading treatment, or other inappropriate practices.

Our teachers prioritize:

- Preventing harm to children, others, and property.
- Supporting children in developing respectful behaviors towards themselves, their peers, and the community.

We use positive guidance strategies, including:

- Redirecting attention to constructive activities.
- Encouraging problem-solving and discussions about feelings.
- Cultivating empathy by exploring different perspectives.
- Celebrating positive choices to build self-esteem.
- Promoting autonomy through open-ended materials and free choice.
- We do not use time-outs, as they do not effectively teach alternative behaviors. Instead, we focus on explaining inappropriate behaviors and providing constructive alternatives.
- If recurring behaviors arise, teachers will consult the Executive Director and collaborate with parents to develop strategies. In rare cases, a formal care plan may be created. As a last resort, and with one month’s notice, a child may be asked to leave the program (as outlined in the payment agreement). Any suspected abuse is reported to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.



### **Celebrating Birthdays and Special Occasions**

At HELC, we honor birthdays and special occasions as opportunities to build community and celebrate diversity. As a nondenominational preschool, we strive to create an inclusive environment that respects the cultural and personal traditions of all families.

#### **Birthdays**

Families are welcome to bring store-bought snacks with visible ingredient lists for classroom celebrations. Teachers are required to keep the ingredient lists on file, so we cannot accept homemade treats. To ensure safety, our preschool is **peanut- and nut-free**, and we will provide a list of any additional allergens at the start of the year. Please refrain from distributing party invitations at preschool to avoid misunderstandings or hurt feelings.

#### **Cultural and Special Celebrations**

We encourage families to share cultural or personal traditions with the class. Please consult with your child's teacher or ED to ensure the activity is inclusive and appropriate for the classroom.



## **Section 9 - Class Placement & Class Changes**

### **Tiered Lottery-Based Class Placement**

Once registration closes, we begin the lottery-based placement process. This process is conducted in a lottery meeting by the Registrar, Executive Director, and at least three Board Members. During the meeting, a tiered lottery is used to determine the placement order.

The tiers for placement are as follows:

- Board/Staff
- Returning Students
- Alumni Families
- New Students

Students are placed into classes one by one according to their lottery number. If both your first-choice and second-choice schedules are full, your child will be placed on the waitlist for those classes. You will then be contacted via phone or email with the available options. If all classes are full at that time, your child will remain on the waitlist. Please note that this process is thorough and may take approximately six weeks to complete. While we strive to accommodate everyone's preferences, we cannot guarantee specific placements in morning or afternoon classes.

- **Returning students** are guaranteed a spot.
- **Alumni families and new students** will be accommodated based on availability.

Despite the lottery process, the HELC preschool reserves the right to assign a child to a particular class to ensure appropriate class composition and maintain a safe learning environment.

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### **Class Changes**

Students who did not receive their first-choice schedule may transfer to a preferred class if a spot becomes available before **October 31st**. After this date, any remaining vacancies will be offered to families outside of the HELC preschool.





## **Section 10 - Fees, Payment & Withdrawal Policies**

Understanding our fees, payment policies, and withdrawal procedures is essential for a smooth preschool experience. This section provides detailed information on tuition, payment methods, withdrawal policies, and other related guidelines to help families navigate their financial commitments with clarity and ease.

### **1. Application Processing Fee & Class Security Deposit**

To confirm your child's enrollment at Highlands Early Learning Centre, the following are required upon acceptance of an offered spot:

- **Application Processing Fee:** A non-refundable fee of **\$125 per child**, payable via PayPal at [www.highlandsehc.ca](http://www.highlandsehc.ca).
- **Class Security Deposit:** A security deposit equal to **one month's tuition** for the **2-year-old class** or **\$200** for the **3- and 4-year-old classes** will be processed through Kindertales pre authorized debit.

You will receive an email from the Registrar confirming your child's class placement, along with additional registration instructions.

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### **2. Tuition Payments**

Starting January 2025, Highlands Early Learning Centre will use Kindertales, our new management system, for tuition billing and payment processing.

- Parents are required to create an account on **Kindertales** and enter all necessary information, including payment details for **direct debit withdrawal**.
  - Tuition payments will be automatically processed on the **1st of each month**.
  - A **\$10 NSF fee** will be charged for any payments that cannot be processed due to insufficient funds.
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### **3. Withdrawals Policy**

**For 2-Year-Old Classes:**

- The **security deposit is non-refundable** in all cases of withdrawal, including:
  - Withdrawal before the preschool year begins.
  - Withdrawal during the preschool year.
  - Failure to provide tuition payments as outlined.
- If your child completes the preschool year, the deposit will be applied to **June's tuition**.

**For 3- and 4-Year-Old Classes:**

- Highlands Early Learning Centre participates in the **Universal Child Care Prototype Site \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Program** until March 2026.
  - **Withdrawal Policy while under the \$10 a Day Program:**
    - Upon withdrawal, the deposit (or a portion thereof) will be refunded after deducting any outstanding fees.
    - If your child completes the preschool year, the full deposit will be refunded after final childcare fees for June have been processed and cleared through Kindertales.
  - **Withdrawal Policy if the \$10 a Day Program ends:**
    - The security deposit is **non-refundable** in all cases of withdrawal, including:
      - Withdrawal before the preschool year begins.
      - Withdrawal during the preschool year.
      - Failure to provide tuition payments as outlined.
    - If your child completes the preschool year, the deposit will be applied to **June's tuition**.

**General Withdrawal Policy:**

- For withdrawals on or after **August 1**, Highlands Early Learning Centre requires **one full calendar month’s written notice** (“Notice Period”), submitted by the **1st day of the preceding month** (“Notice Requirement”).
- Tuition will be charged during the Notice Period, and your child may attend preschool during this time.
- **Add-On Classes:** There will be **no proration or refunds** for Add-On Classes in the event of withdrawal.

**Notice Waiver:**

- The Notice Requirement may be waived if the preschool is able to fill your child’s spot during the withdrawal month. If the spot is filled, a refund will be issued starting from the date the spot is taken, with any partial month calculated on a **half-month basis**.

**Submitting Notice:**

- Notice of withdrawal must be submitted to the Executive Director or Registrar via hand delivery, mail, or email.

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**4. Probationary Notice**

At HELC, we are committed to supporting every child’s success. However, there may be instances where the preschool environment is determined to be an unsuitable fit for a child, despite our best efforts. In such cases, the following probationary process will apply:

1. **Notice Period:** Families will receive a one-month probationary notice. During this time, the preschool team will work closely with the child and family to address any challenges and develop strategies for improvement.
2. **Personalized Support Plan:** The Executive Director will create a tailored support plan, outlining specific goals and actionable steps to help the child thrive. Parents are required to actively participate in implementing the plan, including regular communication and collaboration with teachers and staff.
3. **Evaluation:** At the end of the one-month probationary period, the child’s progress will be evaluated. If the child demonstrates improvement and is able to meet the expectations of the preschool environment, probation will end.
4. **Immediate Withdrawal:** In severe cases, where a child’s behavior or needs pose a risk to the safety or well-being of others, the preschool reserves the right to require immediate withdrawal. Such decisions will be made thoughtfully and with careful consultation.
5. **Next Steps:** If significant challenges remain after the probationary period and the preschool is unable to meet the child’s needs, the family may be asked to withdraw from the program. Alternatively, parents may choose to withdraw their child at any time during the probationary period.

We believe in working collaboratively with families to support every child. This policy ensures that decisions are made thoughtfully and with the child’s and community’s best interests in mind.

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**5. Late Pick-Up Charges**

To ensure the smooth operation of our preschool, children must be picked up promptly at the end of their class. Late pick-ups will incur the following charges:

- **\$30 per child** for pick-ups within **15 minutes** after dismissal time.
- **\$50 per child** for pick-ups exceeding **30 minutes** after dismissal time.

Late pick-up fees will be automatically processed through Kindertales via pre-authorized payment (PAD) within 2–3 business days of the late pick-up date. These charges ensure that staff can maintain a well-structured schedule and are fairly compensated for their time.

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### **6. Missed Payments**

To ensure timely tuition payments, the following policy applies:

- A **\$10 administrative fee** will be charged by **Kindertales** for any missed payments, in addition to the **missed tuition amount**.
- If **two payments** are missed, future tuition must be paid in **cash**. Alternatively, the preschool may require the withdrawal of your child from the program.

Parents are responsible for keeping their **Kindertales** account updated with accurate payment information. Additionally, parents must notify the **Executive Director** of any changes to banking details to prevent missed payments and associated fees.

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### **7. Tax Receipts**

Highlands Early Learning Centre provides tax-deductible receipts for qualifying gifts and donations over a specified amount. Additionally, tuition receipts for tax purposes are issued in February, covering tuition payments made during the previous calendar year.

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### **8. Affordable Child Care Benefit (Subsidy)**

Families enrolled in Highlands Early Learning Centre's programs for 3–5-year-olds may be eligible for the Affordable Child Care Benefit offered by the B.C. Government. This program can help cover a portion of your child care fees. For more information about eligibility and the application process, please contact us or visit the official website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-funding/child-care-benefit>



Should you require further assistance or have any additional inquiries, please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Daniela Francis, at [director@highlandsELC.ca](mailto:director@highlandsELC.ca)