Parent Handbook
St. John's Christian Nursery School

22 Willow St. Waterloo, ON
(519) 746 - 4202

Director: Christine Helgerman, RECE: director@stjohnsns.ca
Supervisor of Operations & Pedagogical Mentor: Kim Lem, RECE
supervisor@stjohnsns.ca
Office Administrator: Absence Reporting: Marianne Butler, RECE
admin@stjohnsns.ca

www.stjohnsnurseryschool.ca
https://www.facebook.com/St.JohnsChristianNurserySchool

2026-2027

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WELCOME TO THE PROGRAM

Welcome to St. John's Christian Nursery School. We are happy you have joined our program and will be part of our early learning community.

St. John's Christian Nursery School is a non-profit, public nursery school open to any child regardless of need, race, religion, gender, or background. We also work with community agencies to ensure the needs of all the children in our school are met. Municipal childcare subsidies are available to those families who qualify through the Region of Waterloo Children's Services by applying online, or you can call 519-575-4400.

This parent handbook is to provide you with a better understanding of our center and programs we offer. If you have any questions, please contact us:

St. John's Leadership Team

Director: Christine Helgerman, RECE
director@stjohnsns.ca 519-746-4202

Please contact Christine regarding fees, changes in enrollment, allergies/medication, program, staff, Board of Directors, or any school related questions.

Supervisor of Operations & Pedagogical Mentor: Kim Lem, RECE
supervisor@stjohnsns.ca

Please contact Kim regarding lunch requests, enrollment or program questions, or any other day-to-day operations. Kim is also our pedagogical mentor and can support families finding resources.

Office Administrator: Marianne Butler, RECE
admin@stjohnsns.ca

Please contact Marianne to report any child absences, changes in personal information or onelist questions. Our admin email manages our Safe Arrival program. All the leadership team has access to this email.

Hours of Operations

We are located on the 2nd floor of Trillium Lutheran Church. We offer morning programs for children aged 18 months to 5 years, and a 6-hour program for children aged 2.5 years to 5 years.

Our morning half-day toddler program (18 months-2.5 years) has 1 timeslot available **9:00am -12:00pm**, Monday to Friday. Our morning half-day preschooler program (2.5 years to 5 years) has 2 timeslots available **9:00-12:00pm or 9:00-12:30pm including lunch**, Monday to Friday.

Our 6-hour program for preschoolers (2.5 years-5 years) has 2 time slots available either **9:00am-3:00m or 9:30am-3:30pm**, Monday to Thursday and on Fridays, **9:00am-12:30pm including lunch. With a 6-hour license we do not offer an official sleep room. Please see page 16 for more details**. Unfortunately, **no extended time** can be added to the 6-hour program, and **we do require prompt pick-up from this program as any late pick-ups compromise our license.**

When you register your child, you will pick your program, your timeslot, and days of the week. Your time slot will be set but if you need to change it, please email the Office Administrator to switch if needed. It is very important that you adhere to your time slot, as staffing is based on those hours, and our license does not allow for late pick-ups from our 6-hour program.

Our **2026-2027** school year starts on **Wednesday, September 9th, 2026,** and ends on **Friday June 25th, 2027**. Please see the appendix at the end of handbook for a full list of school closure dates. Before our school year begins, we look forward to welcoming all our families to our **Open House on Thursday, September 3rd, 2026.**

History of St Johns Christian Nursery School

On October 15th, 1984, the church council was informed of the beginning of an ad hoc committee lead by Lynne Bennet and Helen Toman that was formed to study a Christian Co-operative Nursery for St. John's.

In November of 1984, during the first meeting, they sent out surveys to determine what type of school should be offered. The decision not to offer a co-operative school was made based on the returned surveys.

On February 18, 1985, a motion was carried "that a Christian Nursery School be started at St. John's Lutheran Church and that the St. John's Christian Nursery School Board be a subcommittee of the Learning Committee."

In September of 1985, the school was opened, with one qualified educator, for five mornings per week. A government grant was received to cover 80% of capital costs. St. John's Church covered the remainder. Soon a second non-ECE person was added due to the number of children. In January of 1986 the Friday morning was dropped, and the year ended in May.
In September 1986 the school reopened with two Early Childhood Educators, a new 2-year-old program on Friday mornings, and four morning and two afternoon programs for children 3 to 4 years old. In January 1987 two more afternoons were added, so the year ended with classes on four and a half days. The school year ended in June. The school year of 1987-88 began with 51 children enrolled. In September 1988, the toddler program moved to Wednesday mornings and afternoon program was offered 3 days. By the spring of 1988 there were 62 children enrolled, and the school was doing well.

In 2001 we operated an A.M. Preschool and JK program Monday through Friday, a Toddler program Tuesday through Friday, and a P.M. Preschool program. Eighty families enrolled in the centre, and we employed seven staff. In 2004, we added Mondays to our Toddler Program, as well as a P.M. JK program.

A license approval from the Ministry of Education was received in January 2016 for St. John's to add the 6-Hour Day program for children 30 months and up. Children in this program are provided with a lunch from a catering service. It was also at this time that we were approved an alternative licensed capacity of 55 children.

In 2017, the Nursery School and WITDA Camp started a sharing space agreement over the summer months. WITDA summer camp runs July and August in the Nursery School space and uses all our toys and equipment during those months.

Currently, St. John's is licensed Monday to Friday in the morning, and Monday to Thursday in the afternoon. There is a Toddler program 5 mornings a week, Preschool program 5 mornings

and 4 afternoons per week and a 6-Hour Day program 4.5 days per week. Our program runs September until June, and we close for 2 weeks over the Christmas break and 1 week at March break. The school serves approximately 100 families per year. Our licensed capacity is for 55 children at any one time, and we employed approximately 12 staff.

In 2018, St. John's Lutheran Church amalgamated with 3 other congregations to form Trillium Lutheran Church. It was voted that the Nursery School would keep the name 'St. John's', to remain a part of the St. John's Lutheran Church Legacy.

In 2018, we added our second playground with the assistance of a government grant. Along with some larger renovations of new flooring, classroom cupboards, lighting, and a loft in our gross motor room.

In 2020 we were shut down from March 2020-September 2020 and the following January-February 2021 and again April - September 2021 due to a global covid 19 pandemic. Our program when operational ran with lower capacity and shorter hours to accommodate all the guidelines with extra cleaning and screening requirements.

In 2022 we added space to our preschool playground. Thank you to Trillium Lutheran Church for allowing this expansion. As well in 2022, St. John's Christian Nursery School opted into the Canada Wide Child Care System (CWELCC). Fees were reduced by 25% April- December 2022 and a further reduction in January 2025, taking fees down to a daily maximum of $22/per day. This was great news for families to make quality childcare more affordable. Under CWELCC we receive most of our funding from the Ministry of Education and need to adhere to the new CWELCC guidelines and financial accountability.

In 2024 the Board approved a Playground Revitalization Project. This project will be done over the course of many years and will be supported by Grants, Funding and Fundraising opportunities. We are currently working with a landscape designer to develop our plan.

In 2025, St. John's celebrated 40 years! We hosted a large community event that welcomed back many alumni children, families and past staff.

In addition to celebrating our 40th anniversary we introduced a new Muddy Buddy Rental Program. This supports our love for outdoor learning (see Muddy Buddies for more details).
St. John's entered the CWELCC funding formula agreement and fees are capped at $22/day.

St. John's changed our license with the Ministry of Education. We still have the same capacity of 55 children at one time but instead of having one preschool room with 16 and one preschool room with 24 children, both preschool rooms will now have 20 children in each. The toddler program remains the same for 15 children each day. This is intended to help meet the needs of all children in our care.

In 2026, St. John's is expanding our preschool spaces from 40 to 48 children. We plan to increase our license capacity from 55 to 63 children on any give day.

St. John's has maintained a high-quality program where opportunities are created for children are valued as competent and capable. We follow the Canadian Charter of Human Rights. Children, families and staff have the right to an inclusive environment. We provide a space that every child, family and staff has a sense of belonging and individuals are respected for their diversity.

St. John's is a non-profit organization. The Ministry of Education licenses St. John's Christian Nursery School under the Child Care and Early Years Act. The school also acts as a training facility for students attending Conestoga College's Early Childhood Education program and Bachelor of Education Programs, coming to us for alternative placements. Students enrich our programs and give staff ongoing opportunities to be mentors and stay connected with current research and practices.

Program Statement

We provide a warm and caring, inclusive, nurturing environment with the understanding that strong relationships between children and educators is the foundation of care and development. We value children as competent learners: capable of making decisions, following their own interests, and guiding their own learning. Educators are skilled professionals who are reflective in their practice and observations to ensure that all the children are supported and cared for as they explore their environments through play.
We follow *How Does Learning Happen,* through the Ministry of Education to deliver a positive learning environment. Using the 4 foundations as the building blocks that guide our bonds between children, family and educators to ensure optimal learning and healthy development for children and in our care.

Four Foundations Learning:

Sense of Belonging

Our goal is for each child, family, educator, and anyone who enters our space feels a sense of belonging at St. John's. We believe that everyone has a fundamental right to belong and understand how important it is to have an environment where this is possible. Every morning, when you arrive at St. John's with your child, you will have the opportunity to connect with an educator to share any important information about your child. We understand that drop-off can look different for every family and can vary from day to day. As a team we are here to ensure a supportive transition. Children are welcome to bring comfort items to school i.e., blankets, soothers, or familiar item from home, this may help some children to cope with leaving their family member in the morning.

Leading up to the beginning of the new school year we host an open house for families. This provides an opportunity for children and their families to connect with our educators before the first day. Providing time for open conversations and sparking moments of connection. We offer a video on our website that you and your child can watch together. This provides an excellent opportunity for your child to become familiar with the program before that all important first day. Once your child is in our care, parents and educators connect on matters relating to your child's day, or in other ways that ensure your child is reaching their full potential.

Expression
Everyone has the right to express themselves in a supportive and caring environment. Open and honest communication is essential for educators and families. We want families to have their voices heard and feel comfortable to express their ideas, thoughts and feels with your child's educators. This happens in a variety of ways such as by connecting at drop-off and pick-up, during parent-educator engagement events, through emails sent to the office, phone calls throughout the day and during our annual parent survey. We encourage, support and celebrate children's efforts in a variety of developmentally appropriate ways. Sharing ideas and feelings with educators and peers strengthens children's emerging language skills, their sense of independence, and confidence.

Our world is unique and diverse. As a community at St. John's, we seek uniqueness in every individual and family who enters our space. It is our duty and desire as educators to get to know everyone in our St. John's community and provide an environment that is inclusive and equitable for all. We provide a safe space for sharing stories and experiences in our classrooms and environments. Educators have opportunities to express themselves and challenge one another's practice in a safe environment during weekly Friday afternoon staff meetings.

Engagement
An important part of our program here at St. John's are the strong relationships that we foster and maintain with all our children and families. Educators see themselves and the whole environment as an extension of your home. Every day we work to ensure that these bonds continue to grow as we care for your child. Educators are actively involved in planning and implementing events to engage the whole family throughout the school year and we encourage all families to be involved in whatever way that looks like to them.

Care and learning happen when children are engaged in their play. Through play and inquiry children learn about the world around them. Educators observe children and provide provocations and learning opportunities for exploration based on children's interests. Open-ended materials are provided encouraging critical thinking and exploration. Our outdoor environments are rich in potential fostering an open-ended space for children with room to explore and increase their big body movements. Our programs are flexible, and support educators to adjust the flow of the day taking into consideration the needs and development of the children in their care.

Well-being
A child's well-being grows as they develop a strong sense of self and make connections with others and the world around them. Educators honour children's emotions and choices through care practices. We encourage children to move at their own pace and believe that there are a wide variety of ways that children show a growing sense of well-being.

A sense of independence and self-esteem is vitally important to each of the children in our care. We respect each child as a unique individual and understand that their needs are also unique. We assist the children as they gain confidence in their self-care routines, such as dressing, toileting, and feeding themselves. We schedule times for both indoor and outdoor play exploration in all types of weather.

Food and Nutrition:
We ensure your child is well nourished by providing healthy snack options and a catered lunch that follows Canada's Food Guide as well as Menu Planning & Supporting Nutrition for Child Care Environments. Children always have access to water, and each child should bring in their own individual water bottle daily.

During mealtimes we gather, try new foods, nourish our bodies and engage in conversation. As educators we try to de-pressurize power struggles by setting up our mealtimes with intension, honouring children's independence, body cues and individual preferences. Children are seen as competent and capable of making decisions. Please trust that your child will eat once they are comfortable. We look at not only what a child eats in a day, but what they eat in a week, as this can fluctuate a lot during growth and development. We strive for children to participate in mealtime rituals such as family style meals where children can self serve and mindfully eat based on their hunger cues and food preferences. We like to call children 'learning eaters' instead of 'picky eaters' as children need to be exposed to new foods approx. 20 times to decide if they truly like them. All children are learning to navigate mealtimes with larger groups of children and may need some time to feel relaxed in this environment.

St. John's believes nutrition is a "Division of Responsibility". Grownups are responsible for:
- Offering food choices of nutritional value
- Offering food at optimal times of the day
- Offering food in a space that's appropriate

Your child's responsibility is:
- To choose what they will eat from the food that is offered
- To choose how much they will eat of if they will eat at all

Toilet Learning:
As professionals, we know that it can be difficult to navigate toilet learning with your child. Under our care philosophy, we will help you navigate the signs that your child is showing they are ready for this next step in growing up. Please take time to connect with your child's educator, once you decide it is time to start toilet learning. We will follow the same schedule you are at home, to help make everything as consistent as possible. There will be accidents when your child is first learning, but this is all part of process. Your child's educators are here to help and care for your child as they develop this new skill.

REGISTRATION AND FEES

Wait List

St. John's Christian Nursery School enrolls children into our program each new school year. Our waiting list priority is the following: St. John's families with children currently enrolled and their siblings, St. John's alumni families, families who are members of Trillium Lutheran Church, and then all other families on the waiting list according to the date they registered on the OneList. We start our enrollment by offering spots to our current in-house families first and then our alumni and Trillium families. Once the internal enrollment has been completed, we open spots to the public on our waitlist. As programs fill up, we maintain the regional wait list.
To get on our wait list, you must apply via: www.OneListWaterlooRegion.ca. We will contact you once you have added your name to our wait list as acknowledgement of your application. If spots become available throughout the school year, an email will be sent out to families on our wait list in the above priority order, advising them of the spaces available.

Canada-Wide Early Learning Care Plan

St. John's is approved into the **Canada Wide Early Learning Care System (CWELCC).** This means our eligible childcare fees for children under 6 have been reduced to a daily maximum of $22.00 per day**.** Funding for the Canada Wide System is provided by the Federal government and is being delivered through a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Region of Waterloo. All our **base fees** are eligible for reduction. All **non base fees** are not eligible under the CWELCC plan for reduction. **All non-base fees are not applicable to families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy.**

Financial Policy

We have a **daily rate** for all our programs, which will be billed monthly. This monthly rate will fluctuate based on the number of days of operation in the upcoming month. Since school expenses continue whether your child is present or not, we are not able to offer refunds or discounts for absenteeism due to children's sick days, vacations, or inclement weather closures. **Fees are charged for all operational days.**

We are closed for all statutory holidays, 2 weeks during Christmas and 1 week during March Break. Fees continue as these closures are operational days.

Security Deposit

All families must pay a **1-month security deposit** to reserve their child's spot. The security deposit is held on your child's account and applied towards their last month of care with us.
Due to our summer closure any cancellations after June 1st and throughout the summer months, your security deposit is non-refundable.
If you do not pay your security deposit, your child's spot will not be reserved, and the space will be filled by another family. Any changes to enrollment over the summer months the billing changes will be updated in October, as we require 1 month for any enrollment changes.

Monthly Fees:

St. John's uses Kindertales Software for billing and communication. You will be sent an activation link to create your account. On your account you will need to set up pre-authorized payments either through your bank or credit card. (Please note that credit card payments have a 3% processing fee + $1.00/per transaction) Payments will be pulled from your payment method **on the 1st of each month**. You will receive a notice from Kindertales 3 days in advance of your monthly fees being pulled from your payment method for the upcoming month. The charge will appear under the name "stripe payments" on your payment method.

If your family requires a different payment option, please speak to the Director so that we can make alternative payment arrangements. If your payment is not paid by the end of the month, we will apply your security deposit towards your balance. We want to work with families so please reach out if you need financial assistance or support.

Tax receipts will be available through your Kindertales account and will remain accessible on your account.

Withdrawal/Cancellation Policy

If you need to withdraw your child from our program or make changes to your child's enrollment, (i.e. dropping a day), **one-month's notice is required.** If you give 30 days notice, your security deposit will be applied towards your last months invoice. Any questions regarding fees can be addressed by the Director.

If you withdraw your child without 30 days notice, we will keep your last month's security deposit in lieu of notice.

St. John's reserves the right to terminate your childcare spot if you do not adhere to our policies and procedures including arrears in your fee payments. If your care is terminated by St. John's, you will be refunded your security deposit.

Late Fees

Parents are required to pick-up their children promptly at dismissal time to ensure that educators can plan and prepare for the next group of children.
Any child who stays past their scheduled time is subject to a late fee.
The maximum time a child can be in our program according to our license is 6 hours with no exceptions.

Credits/Refunds

If you have overpaid your fees, we can apply the credit towards the upcoming month. Families can also request a refund for any overpayment or credits. Refunds will be processed through your Kindertales account and will be applied back towards your payment method in 5-7 business days.

2026 Daily Fees:

Program	Hours of Care	Base Daily Fees
Toddler ½ Day	9:00am-12:00pm	**$20.32**
Preschool ½ Day	9:00am-12:00pm	**$13.81**
Preschool ½ Day with lunch	9:00am-12:30pm	**$18.74**
Preschool 6hr Day	9:00am-3:00pm 9:30am-3:30pm Fridays 9:00am-12:30pm	**$22.00** *CWELCC max. daily rate*

****Non-Base Fees are not applicable to families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy ****

Non-Base fees	Cost	Details
Key Fob Deposit	$10/per key fob	Refundable when fob returned.
Muddy Buddy Rental Deposit	$35 for the year	Families can opt in to rent a St. John's Muddy Buddy for the school year.
NSF Fee	$20 per NSF	
Late Pick Up Fee	$10/per 15 minutes	Billed in 15-minute increments
Fundraising Donation	Any amount monthly	Families can opt in to donate a small amount towards our fundraising plan.

All Base and Non-Base Fees are billed through Kindertales.

Mealtimes

Our catered lunch is served daily between 12:00pm - 12:30pm to both the children in our 6hr program or any children signed up in the morning preschool lunch program. During this time, children will be provided with a catered meal from The Lunch Lady. If your child requires alternative food, families can choose to provide supplementary meals, provided they have signed and meet the requirements of our Alternative Food Plan. Families who choose an Alternative Food Plan for their child are required to provide lunches and snacks that meet our nutritional guidelines and come prepared and ready to be served.
** The menu for lunches provided by The Lunch Lady operates on a 4-week rotation and are available at the main entrance of the school or can be found online at www.thelunchlady.ca. and on the St. John's website. The Lunch Lady can accommodate food restrictions and allergies.

Fundraising Plan

In the past families have been expected to invest their time and energy into fundraising as a part of having children attending St. John's. The Board has seen a shift in families' ability to set aside that time to participate in this way. Under the new CWELCC plan we can no longer increase fees and to keep the quality of our program we will continue to fundraise.

As such, they have decided to make fundraising easier for families and are asking families to support our fundraising plan by adding a small donation to their monthly fees. A small $10/month donation can make a huge impact for our program of achieving our fundraising

goals and supporting classroom supplies and equipment. On your enrollment forms you can opt in or out of our fundraising plan.

As a registered charity, St. John's will issue charitable tax receipts for all donations made to the fundraising program in January of each year to be used when submitting tax returns. For those families who can, please consider St. John's as a charity for further donations when deciding on your annual contributions. Donations are welcome and enable us to provide an exceptional learning environment for all our children. Many companies have donation matching programs.

We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support and dedication to the well-being and growth of all the children at St. John's. Together we can create an even better future for our little ones. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

First Meetings and Tours

When children are enrolled, families are welcome to book an individual tour of the centre with the Director/Supervisor and attend our fall Open House on **Thursday September 3rd, 2026. You will receive an email over the summer to register for a dedicated time for your visit on that day.**

We recognize that many children enrolling has never been separated from their grownups and this transition can have big emotions for them. We want to make this transition as comfortable as possible for all children and families.

The Toddler (Seedling) program will have staggered start visits the week of September 9th – 11th, 2026. Your visit times will be sent to you at the end of August. Regular schedule starts the week of September 14th, 2026.

If your child experiences separation anxiety once they have started, please be sure to talk with your child's educator. We will help you and your child through this time of transition. We all want to make the whole school experience a positive one.

Online Registration

Before admission, families will receive an activation link from Kindertales to complete their child's registration. The online registration and all consent forms must be completed and received before your child's first day. Once your child's online registration forms have been completed and submitted to our school, it is very important that you report any changes to the information, should they occur, i.e., home address, phone number, immunizations, emergency contact persons, or health information. As well, pre-authorized payment must be set up in the Kindertales App. **(Please note to set up payments on a desktop device, not on a mobile device).**

Children will be assigned to a classroom based on the program in which they have been enrolled. We have 3 classrooms: **Seedling Room** is our half day toddler program (18 months

to 2.5 years) that is licensed for 15 children. The **Oak** and **Maple Preschool Rooms** (mix of ½ day and 6 hour) 2.5-5 years. Each preschool room is licensed for 20 children.

Your child's classroom and educators will remain as consistent as possible throughout the year, and the curriculum and programming will change according to the children's interests, development and skill levels mastered throughout the year.

Communication

Each month a newsletter is distributed to all families, as well as posted on our website. We hope that you find it informative about school happenings and upcoming events.

Various forms and notices will be emailed to you. Please take the time to read these as they often contain important information. St. John's educators are also available at the beginning and end of the program for discussions about your child. Educators are always open and available for discussion, and can book time outside of program to meet, or have a discussion over the phone or in person. We also provide family engagement events throughout the year, including family drop-in coffee hours with our Resource Consultant from KW Habilitation and a connection day in January, when we close the school, and parents can meet with their child's educators.

Throughout the year we post information on our school website www.stjohnsnurseryschool.ca or on our school Facebook page. If you are on Facebook, please "like" our page for continual updates.

As part of our licensing requirement, we post a copy of our license by our main entrance, as well as any other inspections or important information for parents to be aware of. If any serious occurrences occur, we will inform parents by hanging a notification form by our license.

St. John's is required to share communication from the Minister of Education. Information from the Minister will be sent via email.

SMS Alerts

Our Kindertales software has SMS Alert feature that we will be utilizing for important messages to be sent out. We will automatically switch this feature on. If you would like to opt out of the SMS Alerts, please contact the office. We will use SMS alerts to let families know about inclement weather or any emergency closure days. We will also use this feature to communicate outdoor play changes that come up last minute. We know how busy families are and know that SMS alerts are another way to get messages out quickly.

Absence Reporting

If your child is going to be late, past 10:30am or absent please email admin@stjohnsns.ca, use the absence reporting tool on our website stjohnsnurseryschool.ca or call the school at 519-746-4202. Please leave a detailed message as to who you are, your child's name and the reason for the absence. We may follow up regarding illnesses as some are reportable and tracked by Public Health.

Group Documentation

We document evidence of learning happening in our classrooms. Educators are equipped with iPads to take photos of learning that is occurring. Educators will then document the experience and post the documentation in the hallway, inside classrooms, as well as your child's portfolio. You will be asked to sign a photo consent when your child starts.
Weekly classroom updates will be sent out through the Kindertales App.

Children's Portfolios

Part of our documentation also includes adding evidence of learning into your child's individual portfolio in the classroom. This portfolio is not meant to be a daily or even weekly log of your child's participation, but rather a way to capture key quality, meaningful moments of your child's school experience. When your child starts, we ask every family to provide a 1" binder with 20-30 empty page protectors and have the first page completed by you! This first page is an activity for you and your child to complete together. It should include pictures of your child, their family, pets, things they like to do, etc. It's an "All About Me" page. This will help bring your child's world at home and their world at school together. There is no template, you are welcome to design your page individually. You are welcome to email in this page into the office, and we can print it for you. We encourage you to take home the portfolio anytime as it's a great tool to open dialogue with your child regarding their school experience. You are welcome to add comments and pictures to the portfolio throughout the year, but please always remember to bring it back to school so that the educators can add more photos and documentation of your child's time at St. John's. The children often enjoy looking through their own books with their friends and educators while at school. When your child leaves St. John's the portfolio is yours to keep. This is a special keepsake for you and your child to enjoy for many years. If your child does not have photo consent, please connect with us in the office to find a way for your child to still have a portfolio that works for your family.

Web Based Communication

Our school has a general, publicly viewable Facebook page and Website and this is used to convey school-wide information and updates. We encourage parents who use Facebook to like/follow this page. Please note that all important information regarding the school will also be communicated to all families via email and newsletter, so if you do not use Facebook, you will still receive updates from the school. Our school menus, parent handbook, fees and general school information is posted on our website. Children are not posted on our public Facebook page or Website, unless for marketing purposes and with written parent consent.

Parents Video Taping/Taking Pictures

Please be advised that St. John's is not a public space and therefore no photos or video recording of other children while in our care is permitted.

YOUR CHILD'S DAY

It is important for children's growth and development to incorporate many different learning opportunities into their daily routines. Here at St. John's, we try to optimize growth physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and morally/ethically. We believe that play is the child's most important means of acquiring knowledge and it is our responsibility to provide them with the best opportunities to seize these moments.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child some of the basic principles are that "the best interests of the child:
When decisions are made that affect the lives of children, the Convention says that it is very important to think about what is best for the child. The right to life and development: The Convention says that governments should do their best to help children live and grow to be the best they can be."

Classrooms

St. John's designs their classrooms by following the direction of children's curiosities and interests. We provide children with learning experiences in the following areas: creative arts, sensory exploration, dramatic play, science/discovery, cognitive/quiet thinking, language and literacy, and active role play, including gross motor and music and movement activities. During play educators help children think about solutions to conflicts, encourage children to talk about activities, and introduce concepts through play.

Outdoor play

We believe that outdoor play is an important component of your child's day. It exercises small and large muscles and builds social skills such as cooperation, problem solving, risk taking, turn taking, leadership, and confidence. We believe there are many values of outdoor play including children's connection to the land supported by the indigenous ways of knowing, it supports children's mental and physical health along with building and strengthening children's immune systems and building children's self regulation skills. Outdoor play spaces, under the proper conditions, include testing balance, coordination, improves cognitive functioning, negotiation, conflict resolution, self-advocacy skills, creativity, imagination and reduces stress and anxiety. Having a connection to the natural world it a vital component to your child's development. Outdoor play offers a variety of natural play experiences that cannot be recreated in the classroom. We are in relationship not only with one another, including nature. Having a relationship with nature will encourage positive environmental choices for our youngest citizens. For example, a Maple tree is not just a thing but a who, it provides shade, homes for animals, maple syrup, nutrients for the soil and aide to surrounding trees. The Maple tree is no longer a commodity but rather another living being that we are in relationship with. The four ways of Indigenous ways of knowing are physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. This holistic view is interconnected to the land and in relationship with others.

We have two playgrounds at St. John's. The Seedlings will play on the playground closest to the school's main entrance and the Preschoolers generally use the playground attached to the Coach House across the parking lot. Preschool groups can also access the Seedling

playground when they are not using it. This way everyone has space to play outside for longer period. When weather permits, we eat our snacks and meals outside, as well as having our full program outside. We have shelters to accommodate the weather. Everyday, the educators check the temperature and inspect the playground to decide about outdoor play based on weather, safety, and play value. The decision whether to play outside in the winter will be made for each respective group. Our acceptable outdoor temperature for our Maple and Oak groups is approximately -18 C including the windchill and approximately -12 C including windchill for the Seedlings group.
When it is a rainy day, we could still be going out with the children. If there is no thunder/lightening, the temperature is at least +5 with discretion, and the rain is on the lighter side, we feel that there is value in playing outside.

If you think your child is not well enough to play outside, then they are likely not well enough to participate in the program. If the children will not be playing outside, the sign by the entrance to our school will post an update stating, "No Outdoor Play" and families will drop-off their child inside the school. The weather can change throughout the day, and we may choose to play outside at the end of program. **We ask that children have appropriate outdoor clothing with them each day.**

Muddy Buddies

St. John's is excited about our Muddy Buddy Program to support outdoor play for children. Families can opt in to **rent** a St. John's Muddy Buddy while your child attends our school. The cost for the rental is $35 for the school year and includes families being able to keep the muddy buddy at home and use of it during off school times. The Muddy Buddy can go with your child to and from school and can be sized up during the school year.
When you register, you can decide if you want to opt in to rent a St. John's Muddy Buddy. Dress your child in their Muddy Buddy for school and children will be extra protected from the rain, mud, wind and snow. At the end of the year, return your Muddy Buddy and we will refund your rental deposit. If you decide to keep your muddy buddy we, your rental deposit will be kept.
We want all families to be able to participate in this great program to support outdoor play and have discounted rental fee for families who need financial support. No deposit required for families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy.
Bring your child everyday in their Muddy Buddy ready to play outside.

Six Hour Program

We have two time slots for our 6-hour program either 9:00am-3:30pm, or 9:30am-3:30pm Monday through Thursday and 9am-12:30pm (including lunch) on Fridays.
Children in our 6-hour program will have outdoor play time, as well as discovery time for projects and play. We provide a morning and afternoon snack and offer a catered lunch from The Lunch Lady. **Our 6-hour program does not have a formal sleep time, but we do provide cots for any children who may require a rest or sleep which will be cleaned and sanitized between users. The cots will be place in quieter part of the classroom or outside, out of the elements. If your child naps regularly, the half day program may be better suited for your child.**

Rest Time

Because our programs are less than 6 hours, we are not required to provide a separate sleep room or designated sleep time. We understand that sometimes during the day, children require a rest period and therefore we will provide for it, as well as provide a quiet time after lunch.

** For your child to get the most out of our 6hr program we ask you drop off your child before 10:30am (unless you need a later drop off due to a medical appointment).

Snacks and Meals

Snack and mealtimes are both an educational component and a well-being component during your child's time at St. John's. We view mealtimes as a social time of discussion between educators and children. We provide nutritious and safe foods and offer a variety of snacks. Our snack and lunch menus are on a 4-week rotation. They are posted in the hallway and on our website and Facebook page. Any snack substitutions will be recorded in your child's classroom. The selection of food changes to encourage the children to try new foods and to make their own choices about what and how much they want to eat. Our healthy food choices help to instill healthy habits for their future food choices and preferences. Water is always available to children. All our menus are planned in accordance with Canada's Food Guide, follow Child Care Planning a Practical Guide, 2024 and were developed by a Registered Dietician.

What to Expect

It is normal when your child fist starts in a new program, that they may not eat snacks or lunches for the first little while. Everything is new for them from the educators to the environment to the food and eating with a lot of other children and adults. Parents can sometimes worry when children do not eat and want to send food from home. This is an important time in your child's beginning days to build comfort and trust with the educators and allowing them opportunities to try new foods. We ask that you give your child time to adjust and settle in before sending food from home. We do not always focus on what a child eats in one day but more what they eat over a full week. Please trust us during this beginning process. Once children become comfortable, they will start to participate in our mealtimes. We will reach out and communicate with you through this whole process.

We appreciate and understand that gratitude and love can be shown through food.
As educators we strive to follow the nutritional policy ourselves and ask that if you are considering bringing in food for the educators it must adhere to our nutritional policy i.e. no nuts, low sugar/sodium.

Children in our half-day program are offered a snack that includes food from at least 2 food groups.

Children in our 6-Hour program are offered lunch and 2 snacks within their day. Lunch includes two choices from the fruit/vegetable food group, one choice from the grain food group, one

choice from the milk/alternative's food group, and one choice from the meat/alternative's food group.

Educators not only role model healthy eating by participating in mealtimes but also encourage children to serve themselves to foster their development of independence and allow for them to makes choices.

All food is purchased on a weekly basis to ensure that foods are at their optimum freshness. We encourage a nutrient-rich diet, avoid potentially harmful components such as Trans Fat, and limit unhealthy fat, sodium and added sugars.

Lunch is catered through The Lunch Lady. The menus are posted in the hallway and on our website.

Please inform us of any food allergies or restrictions on your child's registration form.

St. John's is a Peanut/Nut Safe environment.
We do our best to provide an alternative food choice for any children with food allergies and/or limitations, however parents may choose or be asked to provide food alternatives from home if we are unable to meet specific needs. This will be arranged with the office, and parents are required to sign an "Alternative Food Plan".

Before food from home can come into the school, we must ensure it complies with any food allergies present in the school and follows our Anaphylactic Policy. St. John's Christian Nursery School makes every effort to ensure a safe and secure environment for all children in our care. This includes providing strategies for dealing with children who suffer from anaphylactic reactions to allergens, by reducing the risk of exposure to these allergens.

Any food from home must comply with the following rules:

- The food must be in a lunch bag that closes, labelled with your child's name.
- All containers inside the lunch bag must be labelled with your child's name.
- Food needs to be prepared and ready to eat.
- If food needs to be warm, we ask that it comes hot and ready in a thermos as we do not have the capability to heat up lunches.
- If food needs to remain cold, please send it with a cold ice pack.
- Food must be nut free, or free of any other anaphylactic allergens present in the school at the time when the Alternative Food Plan is developed.
- Signs will be posted informing families we are center safe from the allergen, and they will also be discussed when developing the Alternative Food Plan with parents.
- Before the food is served, St. John staff will ensure that the food does not contains nuts or any other allergens that children have an anaphylactic allergy too.
- Staff will read any ingredient labels for allergens or "may contain." If any of the food that is sent contains those allergens, the food will not be served and will be sent back home. If the child does not have any foods available in their home packed lunch/snack that is "safe" from anaphylactic allergens, St. John's will provide an alternative that is safe.

- If a child has an alternative food plan, and their lunch is forgotten to be sent then St. John's will provide food to your child that meets your child's alternative food plan. If we cannot meet your child's alternative food plan needs, then we will ask you to bring lunch for your child or ask you to come and pick them up.
- St. John's will communicate with the parents at pick up that the food was not served due to the allergen being one of the ingredients.
- The above strategy will be revised as necessary depending on the allergies of the children enrolled.
- If a new anaphylactic allergen or any allergens change, the Director will review all current Alternative Food Plans to ensure they meet any new allergens and review with families if changes need to be made.
- **Food from home must meet our nutritional guidelines**. Any foods that do not (i.e., refined sugars, candy, high sodium) will not be served and sent back home and St. John's will provide an alternative.

At times throughout the year, the children might prepare a snack as part of their program. Sanitary practices will be followed according to the Medical Officer of Health, Region of Waterloo.

Children's Belongings

St. John's is a place for children to grow, explore, discover, and learn. Please remember that paint is gooey, glue is sticky, and children love sensory! Please send your children in clothes that encourage them to play. Wet or soiled clothing will be bagged and placed in your child's cubby.

Please provide a pair of labeled running shoes, (not slippers), to leave at school during the winter season. Also, please leave a spare set of clothing at the school that is appropriate for the season. Extra clothes can be stored in a labeled Ziploc bag, (or a reusable shopping bag), in your child's cubby. To help avoid lost or mixed-up clothing, **all** clothing must be labeled with your child's name.

Diapers

We gladly accept children in diapers and Pull-Ups here at St. John's but do ask that only diapers are provided for when your child needs to be changed while at school. If your child is using Pull-Ups, you are welcome to send your child to school in a Pull-Up. However, if their Pull-Up becomes soiled during school hours and they need to be changed, we require diapers that open and close at the sides. This will avoid your child having to take off all their clothes and shoes to be changed.

Children who are preschool aged have their diapers changed while they are standing up whenever possible. Standing diaper changes are less intrusive to children and encourage co-operation and independence. They are also faster and require less surface cleaning, therefore helping to eliminate the risk of contamination.

Cloth Diapers

We also accept children in cloth diapers with guidelines. Parents must provide the diapers and supplies as well as a labeled leak-proof diaper bag for sending home soiled diapers. This diaper bag must be taken home and washed and disinfected each day.

If at any time we experience an enteric outbreak here at school, cloth diapers cannot be used, and you must provide disposable diapers during that time. This is a Public Health requirement. We will monitor the use of cloth diapers. If at any time, there is an increase in illness or if there is a health and safety concern, we may choose to return to disposable diapers only.

Water bottles

At St. John's we want children to have access to water to allow them to make the decision about when to take a drink of water. To ensure this happens, we ask that each child bring a water bottle to school labeled with their name filled with fresh water. The water bottle should have a covered lid or foldable straw to ensure no cross contamination between children's bottles. When your child arrives at school outside children will keep their water bottles in their backpacks and pull them out as needed. When inside, water bottles will be in a carrier and placed inside the classroom at the children's level. Children will take the water bottles wherever the group goes.

If a child forgets their water bottle, St. John's will provide a school water bottle for them. If a family forgets to take their child's water bottle home, we will sanitize it at the end of the day.

It will be parent's responsibility to take home the water bottle every day your child attends to ensure that it is washed, filled with fresh water, and brought back their next day of school. In case you forget your child's water bottle or need a water bottle for your child we have extras at school that we can provide.

Birthdays

There are so many birthdays to celebrate at St. John's, and we know how special they are! It can sometimes be difficult to ensure that all children's birthdays are celebrated on or around their birthdate. Educators will recognize children's birthdays, but **we ask that parents do not bring in food treats from home due to allergies/food restrictions.**

Special Events

At St. John's Christian Nursery School, we want everyone in your child's family to feel part of our school. To do this, we plan family engagement events where we can come together to celebrate and socialize. You will receive more information throughout the school year about our events including our Open House, Winter Family Event, Year End Family Picnic, Parent Connection Day and Family Engagement events, etc.

Also, throughout the year we will host Parent Coffee Hours. There will be a wide range of parenting topic discussed, and resources shared. We hold space to make connections with other families and share your stories and experiences with one another.

Scent Awareness

We are scent aware at St. John's, meaning that we don't eliminate scents but ask that everyone be mindful and avoid over-powering scents or fragrances while they are in the school.

We sometimes use diffusers in the classrooms but have limited the essential oils that we use to: lavender, orange, lemon, frankincense, and cedarwood. If your child is sensitive to any of these scents, please let us know.

Off Site Activities

St. John's Nursery School does not plan any activities offsite from our location (i.e. field trips). We do occasionally go for walks to the community gardens and surrounding areas on the Church property including the downstairs gym (Fellowship Hall), the Spurline Trail and sidewalks about 22 Willow Street, and on occasion Mary Allen Park (please note a safety check of the park is done before children engage with the space). Your enrollment form included consent for your child to walk to those areas. If we plan a walk beyond those areas, separate consent would be obtained.

EDUCATOR POLICIES

At St. John's, we believe that a quality program starts with quality educators. All of our Early Childhood Educators are registered members of the College of Early Childhood Educators, and adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The College of ECE provides a public register for families to search any educator who is a member.

Our Early Learning and Care Educators at St. John's includes:

- An experienced Director who is a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE)
- A Supervisor of Operations who is a RECE, and our Pedagogical Mentor
- An Administrative Assistant who is a RECE and classroom educator
- RECE educators in each classroom
- Support and Supply Staff
- Qualified Volunteers
- Placement students from Conestoga College, Laurier's Bachelor of Education Program, and other learning institutions
- Resource Consultant from K-W Habilitation
- KidsAbilty Spot Clinicians

We pride ourselves on maintaining a calm and respectful environment, valuing each child for their own unique abilities. Our educators' understanding and patience is geared to each individual child as we acknowledge each child's independence and devote our time to their care. We encourage you to check out our website for photos and more details on who our educators are!

Requirements and Regulations

Upon hire, each educator/volunteer/student is required to do a health, and Vulnerable Sector Check. All educators are also required to be up to date with their Standard First Aid, CPR training, Anaphylaxis Allergy training and Safe Food Handling.

Often, we have students and volunteers in our programs; this is a significant part of our community involvement strategy, and one that enriches us in many ways. Our centre offers field placements to students who come to us through our long-standing partnership with Conestoga College and their Early Learning related programs, as well as Laurier's Bachelor of Education Program.

At **all** times, volunteers and students are supervised and mentored by our RECEs and **do not have unsupervised** access to the children in our care. Students and volunteers are not counted as part of our ratios.

Educator-to-Child Ratios

The number of educators in our programs is based on educator-to-child ratios listed in the Child Care Early Years Act. Educators are required to ensure that appropriate ratios are always maintained. St. John's is licensed for a maximum of 55 children (planned for 63 in

September 2026) children in program at one time. They are divided into the following age groups.

- Toddler (18 months – 2.5 years) 1 educator for every 5 children – max group size 15.
- Preschool (2.5 years – 5 years) 1 educator for every 8 children - 2 classrooms max 20 in both preschool classrooms. (24 starting in September 2026)

Commitment and Professionalism

At St. John's continuous professional learning is a part of our guiding philosophy. Our educators participate in various forms of professional learning opportunities, as well as foster their commitment to on-going reflective practice and to being life-long learners. As the field of Early Childhood Education continues to grow and expand, our educators are continually supported in their professional development and quality initiative practices. We value and support lifelong learning.

We have on onsite Pedagogical Mentor that observes programs, provides current research and resources, encourages reflective practice through observation, conversations, and tailored workshop both in centre and the greater community.

St. John's is committed to setting commitments each year through Region of Waterloo Early Years Engage, Continuous Quality Improvement Plant or (CQI).

Early Years Engage supports programs to participate in a continuous process of reviewing practices, developing short and long-term plans for growth, operationalizing work plans and evaluating progress against "Our Vision for Quality in Waterloo Region."

We understand that for children to receive the best that we have to offer, we must take steps to maintain our professionalism. For us, it is vital that RECEs have ample time to prepare and complete administrative duties that do not conflict with classroom time. For this reason, we do not offer programs on Friday afternoons. Educators are given this time to prepare activities, work on documentation and development, participate in team meetings and reflective practice.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Entrance Accessibility

St. John's strives to provide optimal safety for your child and family. Our school entrance has been equipped with a security system. Each family will be asked to pay a $10.00 deposit per FOB which will be returned when you hand your FOB back into the office. Your FOB will be needed to enter the school, as the door is always locked. Families can request more then one FOB for their family or extended family authorized to pick up your child. A security camera also monitors our entrance and hallways. If you forget your FOB, you will need to buzz to get in. **Key Fob Deposits not applicable to families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy.**

We ask that you do not let other people in when you enter or exit the school. Each family must use their own FOB. If someone else is at the door who does not have a FOB, please do not let them in and ask them to buzz the office to gain entry.

We ask that you try to have your FOB with you each and everyday. At times there may not be anyone available in the office, therefore taking an educator away from the children to answer the door.

Classroom Doors

All playroom doors are cut in half to allow the playrooms to be visually open, but the bottom half can be closed to provide security for your child. Our doors also have observation windows to allow parents to observe their children at play without being noticed. If you enter or exit one of our rooms or playgrounds, please always ensure the door or gate is closed securely behind you. Educators take all safety precautions when cleaning classrooms and strive to protect children from hazardous and dangerous materials. All cleaning supplies are stored in an area not accessible to the children.

Shared Space

St. John's Christian Nursery School is a shared space. After hours, the church offers programs available to public groups who sometimes use our classrooms. As well, Trillium and Elevation Church use our school facilities on Sundays for their Sunday School program. Every precaution is taken to ensure private and confidential information is not accessible to any of these groups. The school office is always locked during these times for the protection of any private information.

Safe Arrival and Dismissal

This policy and procedures help support the safe arrival and dismissal of children receiving care from St. John's Christian Nursery School. This policy will provide staff, students, and volunteers a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for ensuring a safe arrival and dismissal for children in our care, including what steps will be taken when a child does not arrive at the childcare as expected, as well as steps that will be followed to ensure the safe dismissal of children.

- St. John's will ensure that any child receiving care is only released to the child's parent/guardian or emergency contact(s), authorized pick up person(s) or an individual

that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization to the school that we can release the child to.

- Educators will mark the time each child arrives and is dismissed from program on their attendance record. Educators will also advise parents of any health or behaviour changes they noted during the program.
- Each child's safety and security are our number one concern. Children can only be released to those people indicated on their personal admission form (parents/guardians/emergency contacts/authorized pickup person). Any changes regarding drop-off and pick up, parents/guardians must provide written authorization (if a person is not on their enrollment form). Written authorization can be given by either email to the school office or by parents completing a dismissal authorization form. If the office receives an email changing pick up produce, the office will inform educators of changes in the pickup person. Educators will then request photo ID if the person collecting any child is unknown to them.
    - In an emergency, and a parent calls in to change a pickup individual, and the individual is not an authorized individual on the child's file, the office will record the change in the children's file and advise the classroom staff of change, and it will be noted in the daily log.
- A parent/guardian may request a sibling or caregiver to pick up their child, but they must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Parents/guardians must provide written authorization.
- St. John's will not release any child 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 procedure below:

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 about the child's evening/morning (health check) this is also when a parent might indicate a change in 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 is listed on the emergency card. If the individual is not listed on the emergency card, ask the parent/guardian to provide written authorization for change in pick-up. (email the office or fill in an authorization change form).
    - Document the change in pick-up procedure in the classroom logbook.
    - School office will put the authorization/email in child's file.
    - 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 St. John's on their expected day, and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message/email or advised the closing staff at pick-up), the educator in the classroom must:
   - Inform the office that the child has not arrived as expected, and the office will email the child's parent/guardian to follow up and find out the reason the child has not arrived at school. If the office staff are not available to email, a phone call will be made to find out the reason of the absence.
   - Once the office receives confirmation of the absence reason, it will be recorded in the office absence logbook, and it will be communicated to the classroom to record the absence reason in the daily log.
   - If the office has no response from the parents via email, St. John's office will follow up with the family the next day and/or the next time the child attends our program. We also could contact emergency contacts if appropriate
   - If we receive no response from a family and we deem it's a safety concern, we will initiative contacting the non -emergency police department to conduct a wellness check

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/emergency contact),
   - Confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
   - 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 emergency card or written authorization.

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

1. Children are signed up for specific timeslots of care at St. John's. If a parent has not advised a change in pick up time and the child has not been picked up on time, the school will proceed with contacting the parents/guardians. The office shall contact the parent/guardian by phone and advise that the child is still in care and has not been picked up. If there is no answer a message will be left on their voice mail.
   - Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian, staff must ensure they have called all contact numbers on the children's file (both parent/guardians' home, work, cell numbers and left messages.

- If no response from either parent/guardian, the school will then contact the authorized emergency contacts on the children file and advise them the child has not been picked up and request them to pick up
- Where the staff has not heard back from the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was to pick up the child the staff shall continue to care for the child in our program and continue to wait until program closes and then refer to procedures under "where a child has not been picked up and program is closed").

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

1. Where a parent/guardian or authorized individual who was supposed to pick up a child from care and has not arrived by 4:00pm, staff shall ensure that the child is offered a snack and engaged in an 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/emergency contacts 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. Ensure Supervisor and/or Director is aware the child has not been picked up.
3. Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file (e.g., the emergency contacts) by 4:30pm, the staff shall proceed with contacting the Family and Children's Service 519-576-0540. Staff shall follow the CAS's direction with respect to next steps.

Parking

Please use extreme caution when driving in our school parking lot. There are little people everywhere during drop-off and pick-up times, and it is very difficult to see them in between the vehicles.

At drop-off and pick-up times, the parking spots closest to our entrance are limited. There are several spaces also behind the Coach House building, and on the far side of our school playground.

Under **no circumstance** can you park your vehicle in the Emergency Zone. This area is clearly marked by signs and yellow lines. This zone must remain clear for emergency vehicles only if there is a need for Fire, Ambulance, and Police in our school or Trillium Lutheran Church.

Both our playgrounds have vehicle safety barriers installed around the perimeter for added protection of those spaces.

Children in Cars

We understand how time consuming and difficult it can be when trying to get children and infants in and out of car seats in a timely manner. We appreciate the extra effort needed to

care for more than one small child at a time however it is never okay to leave a small child unattended in a vehicle even just for a minute as something unforeseen could happen. This also puts us, as Registered Early Childhood Educators, in a difficult situation as we are legally mandated by our Code of Ethics to report any instance in which we are aware of children/infants being left unsupervised. If you find yourself in an extreme situation and you are unable to manage picking up your child while attending to another one, please let us know and we will work together to find a solution to this issue.

Emergency Planning

St. John's goal is safety first. Part of this is to ensure we have safety and emergency planning policies in place for our educators to review and practice so that we know what to do in an emergency. Part of this includes our monthly fire drills practiced with the children, as well as educators reviewing safety protocols annually that includes evacuations, power outages, tornado warnings, lock down, and hold and secure situations.

If an emergency occurs, our first goal is the children's safety. Once we are in a position where everyone is safe, we will then contact parents by phone to advise you of the emergency. We have an emergency binder that has everyone's contact information that we carry with us. We also can send out SMS Alerts to all our families in emergency situations.

In the case of any evacuation, our emergency shelter is at **St. John's Luther Manor – 100 Allen Street East,** (seniors building at the back of the parking lot). This would be where you can meet your child in those types of situations. Our secondary emergency location, (if our first location is deemed not safe), is **The Region of Waterloo Building- 99 Regina Street.**

If we need to go into lock down or hold and secure, you will not be able to gain entry to our facility until the situation has been deemed safe.

If your child has any individual medical needs that include emergency medication, and those medications will always be carried with the educators including during emergencies.

HEALTH AND SAFTEY

Immunizations

We require every child to have up to date immunizations when attending St. John's, and you are required to let us know when your child receives a new vaccination. In addition to sending us a copy of your child's immunizations you will have to upload a copy to Public Health directly. Please the Parent Immunization Letter about how to upload the records to Public Health.

If your child does not have up-to-date immunizations for either conscientious, religious, or medical reasons, please let the office know. There is a Ministry approved exemption form that needs to be completed. For religious/conscientious exemptions the form must be notarized. For medical exemptions, the form must be completed by a doctor. All immunizations and exemptions must be provided before your child can begin in our program.

Illness Guidelines

Our first objective is to minimize the possibility that an illness will be brought into the Centre. As a licensed facility, we are required to follow the health guidelines set out by the Region of Waterloo Public Health Department. These guidelines are designed to ensure that your child is cared for in a safe and healthy environment.

If your child develops any new or worsening illnesses symptoms while at our school, you will be called to pick them up. Your child may be isolated from the other children until they are collected. These rules are in accordance with the Public Health Policies and are aimed at providing optimum health in a childcare setting. Your child's temperature will be taken with an infrared thermometer.

Health restrictions prevent us from allowing sick children into the program. The following is an outline of common illnesses and our policies for exclusion from the program. Please note that this is just a sample and there may be other illnesses not listed here that could also be cause for exclusion from the program.

Colds/coughs/unexplained rashes- Child should stay home for 24 hours to monitor the symptom and can return once symptom is improving or they feel well enough to fully participate in our program

1 episode of either Diarrhea/Vomiting that can't be explained. We will assume that your child is ill and will need to be excluded from childcare for (48 hours)- Child may return when they have been symptom **free for 48 hours.**

Fever (24 hours)- Child may return when they are **fever free for a full 24 hours**.

Pink Eye- Child may return 24 hours after beginning treatment with eye drops.

Chicken Pox- Child is excluded for 5 days after the appearance of blisters and/or until all blisters have crusted over.

Head lice- Child may return after first treatment is completed, and child is nit free.

Strep Throat/Infections- Child may return 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Any Other illnesses- Please call the school to find out the exclusion guideline

You can feel confident that the educators are aware of, and practice Safe Food Handling techniques and that all hygiene standards are in place.

All change tables and toilets are disinfected after each child use, play materials are disinfected regularly, and educators wash their hands thoroughly and frequently. Hand sanitizer is available when handwashing is not available. You will be asked for consent for your child to use hand sanitizer in your online registration forms. No hand sanitizer will be used in our toddler room as it will not be used for children under 2 years of age.

Absence Reporting

Please remember call us at 519-746-4202, email admin@stjohnsns.ca or use our absent reporting tool on our website if your child is going to be off due to illness or for any other reason. We are required to document all illnesses, and it helps to keep families informed about colds, the flu, and other communicable illnesses. Our Safe Arrival and Dismissal policy requires us to follow up on all absences.

To ensure an optimal healthy school environment, please be reminded that NO SMOKING or VAPING is permitted on school premises, including, but not limited to, around our playground areas.

Accidents

If your child is injured while at school, your child's educators will fill in an "accident report" and inform you verbally at pick up time about the injury. A copy of the accident report will be sent directly through Kindertales. The Accident Report is assurance that we have reported the injury to you and have followed all our policies regarding injuries. If your child's injury is of a serious nature, we will contact you immediately. Some examples of injuries that we consider serious are a goose egg on their head, a deeper cut and if they need medical attention and/or your child is not settling after the injury. Therefore, it is important that you keep your contact information current.

Medication

The administration of prescription medicine to any child in our care, requires parents to fill in a medication form providing permission for the centre to administer the medication. After providing your child's educator with the approved medication it will be kept in a locked medical box either in the refrigerator or in your child's program room or the main office. We will only administer medications prescribed by a doctor that are in their original container and are clearly marked with your child's name, expiration date and follow the doctor's recommended dosage.

Non-Prescription Products

Upon registration you signed authorization for us to apply any non-prescription products including diaper cream, moisturizing skin lotion, lip balm, insect repellent, and hand sanitizer while in our care. Hand sanitizer is available when handwashing is not available. No hand sanitizer will be used in our toddler room as it will not be used for children under 2 years of age. Hand sanitizer is provided by the school and meets Public Health guidelines. Any other non-prescription products must be in its original container, clearly labeled with your child's name and application instructions provided. All non- prescription products will be provided by parents and can be brought as needed. Please speak with your child's educator if you bring any non-prescription products that need to by be applied.

Sunscreen

During the warmer months we ask families to apply sunscreen to their child before they come to school. We will reapply during our programs if we are outside for longer periods and your child is showing redness to keep them sun safe. If your child attends the 6hr program, educators will reapply sunscreen on your child if they go outside in the afternoon. St. John's will provide the sunscreen for the afternoon or mid morning (if needed) application. Sunscreen provided is minimum SPF 50. We apply sunscreen when the UV report is higher than 5. Sunscreen consent is on the Kindertales App.

Epinephrine/Medical Plans

If your child has an anaphylactic allergy, or any other requirement for emergency medication, please speak to the school Director. The school, along with parents, will put into place an individual plan for your child. This plan will include your child's picture, risk avoidance, signs/symptoms, emergency procedures, and training.

We require that a child's epi pen/emergency medication is kept here at school and not go back and forth between school and home. This medication/device will be kept out of reach of children in the classroom emergency binder, which the educators always carry with them and locked in the staffroom at the end of each day or when your child is not in attendance.

Children with anaphylactic allergies who are deemed mature enough by their parents and by the school Director may carry their own EPI Pen/medical device with them. This is an important skill for children to master as they are responsible for their own EPI Pen/medical device once they are school-aged.

For EPI-pens we recommend a second auto injector is kept on site. All educators review anaphylaxis and emergency medical plans annually.

ASSISTANCE AND REGULATIONS

Behaviour Guidance

The centre has set clear limits designed with the safety of the children in mind. These rules will be kept to a minimum and will be enforced consistently and with an awareness of the children's needs.

Guidance and Understanding

We believe that building relationships based on honesty, respect, trust, and warmth is an important part of creating a sense of belonging for your child. We have realistic expectations that each child is competent and capable to make good choices based on both our guidance and the unique needs of each child. We encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions and emotions while providing them guidance to make choices for themselves. We have spaces in our rooms for children to self regulate.

St. John's program has schedules and routines that make sense to a child's needs and understanding of time. The physical space and materials provided allow for active participation and continuous play. Educators are always involved with the children, providing them with attention, conversation, and positive guidance.

We strive to make each child feel safe and appreciated with an understanding that it is the child's behaviour that may not be acceptable, not the child. The educators will take ownership and identify their fears, ideas, and concerns by beginning with the statement with "I". For example, "I am afraid when you are standing on that chair, you need to sit on the chair because you might fall and hurt yourself or someone else."

Seeking to understand a child's behaviour is an indication of what is going on in their mind and body. Acknowledging a child's strong ideas and independence when guiding them through self-regulation is an important part of problem solving.

We guide our own responses to a child's behaviour by working on solutions together through the guidance of three simple steps:

1. Define the problem.
2. Create several solutions together. Encourage the child to participate in creating solutions.
3. Choose the solution that works for the children and center expectations.

Prohibitive Practices

The Ministry of Education outlines in the Ontario Child Care and Early Years Act a list of **"prohibitive practices"** for licensed childcare operators. At no time would St. Johns allow for the following:

- Corporal punishment of a child
- Physical restraint of a child, such as confining a child to a highchair, car seat, stroller, or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu or supervision, unless the physical

restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting themselves or someone else and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.

- Locking the exits of the childcare centre for the purpose of confining a child in an area or room without adult supervision unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine their self-respect, dignity, or self-worth.
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will

STAYING INVOLVED AND CONNECTED

Keeping Connected

We always maintain an ongoing rapport with families, and this is done in a variety of ways. Our monthly newsletter is our main information-sharing document; this is where we can build on our daily conversations and pass along information. We also use email and Facebook to communicate updates. Additionally, we have family engagement events and yearly satisfaction surveys where we engage families and encourage their feedback on our work. At drop-off and pick-up times, we invite families into their child's classroom so that they can share in activities and observe their children at play.

Although the children are our main priority, it is also important that families engage with us. We support a diverse community and often go above and beyond to help; for example, organizing food and clothing drives for families in need. For new members of the community, we also offer information on resources and events that may help with a welcoming transition into the community.

St. Johns likes to make sure we stay involved with the community and we take pride in working with a number of agencies such as: *KidsAbilty*, *KW Habilitation*, and *Special Needs Access Point (SNAP).* We can make referrals for children to have an assessment for any areas of development at no cost to families.

The Board of Directors/Volunteers

A committee of parent and family volunteers and the school Director govern St. John's Christian Nursery School. The Board of Directors meets once per month during the school year and is responsible for monitoring all aspects of the school. The Board also has regular contributions to the school newsletter and keeps other parents informed of decisions made and policies introduced. Please feel free to contact the Board with any comments, questions, or concerns.

If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors, please speak to the school Director or the school President. We do require a criminal record check for all our volunteers, and this includes our Board of Directors. Criminal reference checks must be done through our local police department. Third-party criminal reference checks will not be accepted.

The time commitment is minimal, but vital for our school's operation. Parent and family volunteers are also needed for school events, fundraisers, making playdough, doing laundry, shopping for the school. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Supervisor of Operations.

Parent Issues and Concerns Policy

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in our Nursery School and regularly discuss your child's experiences with the educators. As outlined in our Program Statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, families, and educators. To foster this engagement, we support ongoing communication with parents about the program

and their children. Our educators are available to engage with parents/guardians in conversation and support a positive experience during every interaction. Educators are available at drop-off and pick-up times for daily communication.

We realize that issues or concerns can come up and we want to ensure that all issues and concerns are addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties as quickly as possible. An initial response to any issues or concerns brought forward will be addressed in 5 business days and families will be continually informed throughout the resolution process.

When issues or concerns arise, we encourage you to speak to your child's educator first, and they will try and resolve the issue with you. Below are steps you can take to address issues and concerns:

<table>
<tr><th>Nature of Issue or Concern</th><th>Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:</th><th>Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:</th></tr>
<tr><td>Classroom-Related Concerns
E.g.: schedule, programming sleep arrangements, toilet training, indoor/outdoor activities, feeding arrangements, etc.</td><td>Raise the issue or concern to:
- the classroom educator directly

or
- the Supervisor of Operations via email or phone call</td><td rowspan="3">- Address the issue/concern at the time it is raised

or
- arrange for a meeting with the parent/guardian within 5 business days.

Document the issues/concerns in detail. Documentation should include:
- the date and time the issue/concern was received.
- the name of the person who received the issue/concern.
- the name of the person reporting the issue/concern.
- the details of the issue/concern; and
- any steps taken to resolve the issue/concern and/or information given to the parent/guardian regarding next steps or referral.

Provide contact information for the appropriate person if the</td></tr>
<tr><td>General, Centre- or Operations Related Concerns
E.g.: fees, hours of operation, extended care, staffing, waiting lists, menus, etc.</td><td>Raise the issue or concern to
- Director or
- President of The Board of Directors, Sarah Whyte, in writing via email sarah.e.whyte@gmail.com</td></tr>
<tr><td>Concerns with Staff/Student/Volunteers Director-, and/or Licensee-Related Issues</td><td>Raise the issue or concern to
- the individual directly

or
- the Director and Board of Directors

If your concern is not addressed at this level contact the Ministry of Education at 1-877-510-5333</td></tr>
</table>

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
	All issues or concerns about the conduct of staff/students or volunteers etc. that puts a child's health, safety and well-being at risk should be reported to the Director as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.	person being notified is unable to address the matter. Ensure the investigation of the issue/concern is initiated by the appropriate party within 5 business days or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. Document reasons for delays in writing. Provide a resolution or outcome to the parent(s)/guardian(s) who raised the issue/concern.

Privacy Policy

To ensure privacy of all family members, children and educators, St. John's has developed policies and practices that all staff follow. St. John's Privacy Policy is kept on file in the school office and is accessible for parents at any time.

Personal Information is collected at the time of enrollment and kept on file. This information is used solely for maintaining our legal obligations and licensing requirements with the Ministry of Education, and for ensuring optimal care for your child while attending St. John's Christian Nursery School.

All information is kept private and confidential. Questions regarding the collection of personal information should be directed to the Board of Directors Secretary, St John's Christian Nursery School 22 Willow Street, Waterloo ON, N2J 1V5 Telephone: 519.746.4202.

Inclement Weather

If there is inclement weather we send out a closure notification through SMS Alerts, email, on our public Facebook page and our schools website. We will email all families in the morning and will leave a message on our out-going school voicemail.

Our policy is: If the Waterloo Region Schools are closed due to the weather, our programs will be closed.

Fundraising

St. John's Christian Nursery School participates in smaller fundraisers throughout the school year. The money from the fundraisers is used to purchase new school equipment, toys, and craft supplies. Some of our fundraisers include Mabel's Labels, and usually a poinsettia fundraiser in December. All fundraising dollars go back into the school for new supplies or special projects. Thank you for your support.

Welcome Again

Thank you for taking the time to read our parent handbook. When you complete your registration package you will be asked to sign off that you have read and agree to adhere to all the policies in the handbook along with our program statement. We ask everyone to be respectful to all individuals in our space including our educators and other families. We want everyone to feel like they belong and are safe in our school community.

We commit to including your child into all aspects of our program. If your child or family has any barriers to participate in our program, such as a need for equipment or personal items, please let us know and we will do our best to offer support.

Please reach out if you have any further questions or need clarification.

Things to Bring 2026/2027

- ☐ Have you received the activation link from Kindertales and set up your account?
- ☐ Have you completed all the Registration Forms through Kindertales?
- ☐ Have you set-up your monthly pre-authorized payment method through Kindertales? **This must be done on a desktop and not a mobile device.**
- ☐ Consent to SMS Alerts on Kindertales
- ☐ Have you emailed a copy of your child's immunization record to the supervisor?
- ☐ Have you uploaded a copy of your child's immunization to Waterloo Region Public Health?
- ☐ Have you uploaded a photo of your child to Kindertales? Or emailed a photo to the supervisor? This photo is used on their cubby, so it is great for them to see it on their first day at school.
- ☐ Has your security deposit been paid through Kindertales (1 month's fee)
- ☐ Indicate the number of key fobs your family requires. You can pick up your key fobs at the open house or on your child's first day. Key fob deposit will be billed through Kindertales. No deposit required from families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy
- ☐ Have you opted into the monthly Fundraising program?
- ☐ Have you signed up for our Muddy Buddy program? There is a $35 security deposit to rent a St. John's Muddy Buddy. Deposit is billed through Kindertales. No deposit required from families in receipt of Child Care Subsidy
- ☐ Consider donating a box of Kleenex and/or package of baby wipes to the school.
- ☐ A 1-inch binder with an "All about me page", which you and your child can make together.
- ☐ 20-30 clear empty page protectors in your child's binder.

Check your child's backpack and/or cubby each day to ensure that it contains each of the following items:

- ☐ A full change of clothes (including socks and underwear) in a resealable plastic bag (large Ziploc bag) that will be kept at school in your child's cubby. **All** items labelled.
- ☐ Diapers if needed. (Cloth diapers are accepted with a few guidelines-please see Parent Handbook) **All** Diapers must be in a resealable plastic bag labelled with your child's name. A supply of diapers will be kept in the resealable bag in the washroom, and you will be informed by your child's Educator when you need to supply more.
- ☐ Dress your child in their muddy buddy for the wet, rainy, cold and messy outdoor play days
- ☐ Indoor shoes (for winter/wet rainy season) and can be kept at school.
- ☐ A clearly labelled water bottle with a straw or drinking spout that can close.
  *We will send your child's water bottle home daily for you to wash and return with your child filled **(water only)** on each day they attend.
- ☐ An empty plastic/cloth bag so that we can pack up any soiled clothing or items.

Every item your child wears and/or brings to school **must be labelled** so when they get misplaced, we can relocate them. Thank you in advance.

Closure Dates for 2026-2027 School Year

- ☐ Monday September 7th, 2026: Stat Holiday
- ☐ Tuesday September 8th, 2026: St. John's Professional Learning Day
- ☐ Monday October 12th, 2026: Stat Holiday
- ☐ Monday October 19th, 2026: Region Wide Professional Learning Day (no fee charged)
- ☐ Monday December 21st, 2026, through to Friday January 1st, 2027: Christmas Closure
- ☐ Friday January 29th, 2027: Parent Connection Day
- ☐ Monday February 15th, 2027: Stat Holiday
- ☐ Monday March 15th through to Friday March 19th, 2027: March Break Closure
- ☐ Friday March 26th & Monday March 29th, 2027: Stat Holidays
- ☐ Monday May 24th, 2027: Stat Holiday
- ☐ Friday June 25th , 2027: Last day of school