

**Westgate Heights
Early Learning Centre**

A place for YOU



Parent Handbook
(Revised June, 2017)

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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome to Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre!

This handbook contains the centre policies and procedures regarding the program, the care of your child and the general operation of the centre. Please take the time to read it. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to speak with me.

Responsibility for your child is not taken lightly. Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your child – we hope all children we care for enjoy their days at Westgate Heights.

Please keep this handbook for your reference should something arise for which you wish clarification.

Sincerely,

Lara Bergen

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Mission Statement

The mission of Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre (Westgate Heights) is to help meet the need in our community for affordable, quality childcare. At Westgate Heights, we believe that all children have the right to be cared for in a safe, loving and stimulating environment.

Westgate Heights provides a carefully planned environment which ensures all children are able to participate to their full potential by serving individual needs while facilitating each child's growth in the areas of social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive development.

Westgate Heights works in partnership with parents, recognizing the primary importance of the family in the development of the child. We value parents' commitment to their children and we support parents in meeting their responsibilities to their children.

A. PHILOSOPHY

At Westgate Heights we endeavour to help children grow physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually through a loving, fun, safe and stimulating environment based on Christian values and teachings. Our objective is to provide the best care possible by establishing a partnership with their parents. Each child is unique, and utilizing the Early Learning and Childcare Department's "Play and Exploration Guide", we tailor activities and care to meet individual needs and interests.

B. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. About Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre

Westgate Heights provides a warm, home-like atmosphere. It is operated by Westgate Alliance Church Inc. and licensed for the care of 66 children ranging in ages from 6 weeks to 12 years. Children are further divided into groups according to their respective ages and development levels, for the specialized programming that is offered.

Staffing in the programs is designed to provide high quality teacher to child ratios. Westgate Heights will not exceed a staff / child ratio of 1:3 for infants; 1:5 for toddlers, 1:10 for preschoolers and 1:15 for school age children.

2. Administration

Westgate Heights adheres to the Child Care Regulations set up by the Department of Early Learning and is subject to policies set by the Westgate Alliance Church Board of Directors. The Parents Advisory Committee (composed of a minimum of 2 parents of children at Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre), working under the leadership of the Director of the Centre, makes recommendations and provides information and feedback that will be used by the Board of Directors when making decisions governing the Centre. The Centre Director is responsible for the daily operation of the Centre. Parent Advisory Committee meetings are open to all parents and parents are encouraged to attend. The Annual General Meeting is normally scheduled for one evening in the spring every year. **All parents are invited to the Annual General Meeting.**

3. Smoking Policy

There is no smoking allowed on the Centre premises, inside or out. This includes parents, visitors and staff.

C BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

All discipline is handled in a non-punitive manner. We use a variety of strategies to reinforce positive behaviours and minimize misbehavior. These strategies include:

- Clearly and frequently stating expectations
- Modeling appropriate behavior
- Being consistent, firm and fair
- Providing choices where appropriate
- Redirecting misbehavior (distracting children)
- Rewarding positive behavior and ignoring negative behavior (except when dangerous, destructive or harmful to oneself or others)
- Removing child from a situation (this may include a brief “time out” - but only after other strategies have been tried and have not been effective)

Different discipline techniques are used for each incident depending on the circumstances and individual child. Guidelines for staff include:

1. Staff handles all disciplinary action in a positive atmosphere of mutual respect, courtesy, nurturing and self-control.
2. Corporal punishment is strictly forbidden. Children are never shouted at, berated, shamed or humiliated.

Behaviour that is severely disruptive or harmful to the children and/or the program is not acceptable. If such behavior persists despite consistent attempts of Centre staff to manage the behaviour, the Director may decide to terminate the agreement of Centre services for the child involved. For such termination, 30 days notice is given to the family unless the behaviour is disruptive or harmful enough that immediate removal is required.

D. COMMUNICATION

Our centre supports an "open door" communication policy. You are always welcome to drop in and spend time with your child and/or observe the activities of the centre. Each family has a mailbox. These are used for distributing all written materials (newsletters, notes, receipts, etc.). Please check your mailbox daily.

1. Informal

Staff welcomes communication with parents. Please inform caregivers of any changes in your family and home situation. As well, information about your child's sleep patterns, health and general well-being should be shared. This information allows staff a greater understanding of your child's needs. The staff is also happy to share with you your child's activities, milestones and challenges.

2. Formal

Notes describing children's accidents, incidents, upsets, delights and milestones will be distributed as needed. For infants & toddlers, please answer any questions on the communication sheet each morning. Feel free to discuss any concerns, questions or other matters with Centre staff.

E. GENERAL POLICIES

1. Hours

The Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 7:30 am and 5:30 p.m. The Centre is closed on statutory holidays (New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, and Christmas Day). Prior to Christmas, Easter and summer holidays parents will be surveyed to determine staffing needs.

2. Late Charges

All parents and their children must be **gone** from the Centre by 5:30 p.m. each day. If for any reason, you are going to be late, you must contact the Centre and inform the staff and/or Director. When children have not been picked up or have not left the centre the following late charges apply:

From 5:30 – 5:45 p.m. or any portion thereof - \$25.00 per day

From 5:45 – 6:00 p.m. or any portion thereof - an additional \$25.00 per day

3. Fees

A deposit of \$600 per child is required to guarantee a spot in the Centre. This deposit will be applied to the last month's fees. Parents must provide the Centre with at least **1 month written notice when moving their child from the Centre**. Without adequate notice, parents will be required to pay for an additional month.

Fees are charged monthly in advance (due on the first of each month). If an account becomes overdue (exceeding 3 working days) a late payment fine of **\$10.00 per day** will be applied and a notice of overdue account will be provided to the parent. If the balance, including late fees, is not paid in full by the 15th calendar day of the month, the parent will receive notice that Centre services will be terminated immediately. A final opportunity for payment of all past due charges will occur the next business day. At that time a certified cheque, money order or cash payment will restore services in full.

Charges for all NSF cheques will be \$25 per item. If the fees are late as a result of the NSF, a late charge will also be added.

Fee Schedule effective January 1, 2016:

Infants	\$ 850.00 per month
Toddlers	\$ 725.00 per month
Preschool	\$ 650.00 per month
Kindergarten	\$ 600.00 per month from September to June
School age	\$ 350.00 per month from September to June
School age	\$ 575.00 per month from July to August

4. Picking up and dropping off children

Parents must accompany their child into the Centre upon arrival. Please help your child take off outdoor clothing and put it away. To ensure safety and comfortable transition, it is imperative that a staff member knows of your child's arrival before you leave and that **you sign your child in and out daily** using the time clock located outside the main office. A unique pin will be assigned to each child in the care of Westgate Heights Early Learning Centre. The Centre does not accept responsibility for children until they are personally handed over to a staff person.

Picking up your child is the reverse of dropping off. A staff member must be made aware that your child is leaving. Please dress your child and collect his/her belongings before going home. In order to allow extra time for your child to put away his toys and/or finish his/her activity, show you his/her projects of the day and get dressed you should *plan to arrive no later than 5:15 p.m.* **You must sign your child out daily using the time clock.**

Please remember if someone other than the parent is to pick up a child, the staff members must know ahead of time and will be required to show proper identification. The staff will **NOT** let a child leave the centre with anyone who has not been authorized by the parent to do so.

5. Clothing

Please provide adequate clothing for your child, to be left at the Centre at all times. All clothing should be labeled with the child's name. Because children will be actively exploring their environment and utilizing a variety of craft supplies, please send your child in "play clothes". Any soiled clothing will be bagged for you to take home and wash. In an emergency situation the Centre will use its small stock of extra clothing. Please wash and return these clothes as soon as possible so they are available for other children to use.

- Diapers: All children who are not toilet trained require a supply of disposable diapers at the Centre. The Centre does not supply diapers. Space is provided to store up to one full bag of diapers per child. Please check your child's supply frequently.
- Supplies to be kept in cubbies: Each child has a cubby for clothing. All children need at least one full change of clothes (children who are toilet training should have 2 or three complete sets). Please check clothing in the cubbies regularly to make sure it still fits and is appropriate to the season.

Please ensure that your child is adequately dressed, for indoor and outdoor activity. Clothing should include:

All Seasons:

- Extra sweater or sweatshirt
- Extra underwear & socks
- Pants
- Indoor shoes

Winter:

- Warm boots
- Outdoor clothing (snowsuit, waterproof mittens, a toque and scarf)

Spring, Summer, Fall:

- Sun screen (for especially sensitive skin)
- Hat
- Raincoat & boots
- Splash pants or splash suit
- Jacket
- Swimsuit & Towel

For safety reasons, it is imperative that every child has a pair of soft-soled, non-slip rubber shoes or slippers to wear in the Centre each day.

6. Parent's Responsibilities

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

We value parental input and encourage you to participate in the Centre activities and operations. We have an open door policy and invite you to visit, eat lunch, and go on field trips with your child. When parents and staff work in partnership it makes for a very rewarding and positive experience for all. You are welcome to drop in or telephone to speak to staff members.

7. Absences

Please contact the Centre as soon as you are aware that your child will not be attending for all or part of the day. This refers to general vacation periods, days of illness and/or days away. Also, please indicate the reason for absence.

F. HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. Nutrition

The children's food is prepared at the Centre. Menus adhere to the Canada Food Guide and follow regulations set by Early Learning and Child Care. Foods that are high in sugar or salt (e.g. candy, chewing gum and junk food) are not permitted in the Centre except on special occasions. The Centre provides two snacks and lunch daily. A menu is posted for your information.

Special diets: Children are encouraged (never forced) to try each food prepared. Exceptions are made for children with food allergies or special diet restrictions. For meal times when children cannot eat the food being prepared due to special diets, parents are responsible to provide alternate foods.

Breakfast: The Centre does not provide breakfast, however, children are welcome to bring their breakfast from home and eat it at the centre.

Children's Birthdays: You are welcome to bring treats (cake, cupcakes, cookies etc.) to share on your child's birthday. This activity is extra special for children on "their days". Because high sugar and salt foods are kept to a minimum, please let staff know in advance if you are planning to bring a treat.

2. Hygiene

To minimize the spread of illness, staff and children follow carefully outlined procedures:

- Children and staff are required to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.
- Strict procedures are followed during diaper change to prevent the spread of infections. The change area is disinfected after each child is changed.
- Soothers/Pacifiers that are to be used while children are up and awake should be able to be clipped to the child's clothing.

3. Illness

Children too ill to participate in the regular program, including outside play, are not well enough to attend the Centre. If your child exhibits symptoms of illness during the day the staff will contact you (or a designated emergency person if the parent can not be reached). Sickness may include a temperature over 37.5 C, skin rash (unless confirmed non-communicable), runny nose or harsh cough. Please come as soon as possible. The Centre is unable to accept sick children in the morning. Please have an alternate person pre-arranged to look after sick children if you cannot be home with them.

4. Communicable Disease

Parents are required to contact the Centre as soon as their child is diagnosed as having a communicable disease. Any children with a communicable disease will be excluded from the centre until the infectious period, as described by the community health unit, is over and the condition is cleared up. Further information regarding specific symptoms and exclusion periods is available from the Director.

5. Medications

Medication can be administered to your child provided you complete and sign the prescribed medication form. Medication will then be administered according to your specifications, and documented. All medication must be in its original bottle and labeled with the child's name. Medications are stored in a locked chest or a sealed unit, depending on whether refrigeration is necessary. Parents are responsible to ensure that all medications are kept current. All expired medications will be disposed of. Parents are required to sign off on all medication forms when your child has completed the course of their medication.

6. Accidents

Centre employees are responsible for performing only simple first aid using supplies from the first aid kit in the event of any accident. All accidents are documented on an accident form. This form is presented to the parent, signed by the parent and placed in the child's file the same day as the occurrence. Each accident is also reported to the Director. In the event of a more serious occurrence, the Director will contact the parent immediately. If an accident requires immediate attention, the Director or designate will:

- If the child is mobile, transport the child in his/her own vehicle.
 - Take the child's emergency card, which has information, required by the hospital
 - Contact the parent or emergency designate
- If the child is not mobile, the Director will:
 - Call an ambulance and contact the emergency department of a hospital
 - Contact the parent or emergency designate

Staff is never allowed to sign consent forms for medical treatment of children.

7. Child Abuse

When there is reasonable ground to believe that a child is in need of protection, because of suspected or disclosed physical, emotional or psychological abuse, Centre workers are required, **by law**, to report this to the Department of Social Services-Child Protection. Failure to do so could result in prosecution under the Family and Child Services Act. Our responsibility is to **report suspicion and disclosures**, not to determine whether abuse has occurred. Reporting procedures are designed to protect the child; parents will not be contacted in these instances. It is the responsibility of Social Services to investigate and decide whether abuse has occurred and to make the necessary contacts with the child's parent or guardian.

Please refer to the Saskatchewan Abuse Protocol 2014:

http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/Publications_Centre/SocialServices/Saskatchewan-Child-Abuse-Protocol-2014.pdf

8. Parents under the influence

If a parent should arrive to pick up his/her child and is obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the staff is required to:

- Ask whether the parent is driving. If they are:
 - Suggest that the parent call a cab
 - Suggest that the parent take a bus

If these measures fail:

- Call the police and report the impaired driver after he/she leaves.

9. Fire drills

Drills are conducted regularly and at any given time during the day to familiarize children with the evacuation plan as well as the sound of the alarm. Children are not allowed to stop for boots/shoes or outer clothing (inside shoes should be on their feet).

G. PROGRAM

The programs and activities of the Centre take into account all aspects of the children's development - physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. We recognize that each child is unique and tailor activities and care to meet individual needs and interests. The children are provided many opportunities for self exploration and discovery. They are encouraged to explore the world around them through free play as well as through directed activities. Learning through play is the heart of our curriculum. Daily lesson plans are introduced through structured themes with the children's interests in mind. The following are guidelines around which the programs are centered:

1. Unstructured Play

Aside from routines, circle and gym times, children choose their own activities. The Centre provides a variety of activity centres that are changed regularly. Children exercise and develop the skill of making choices as they plan and participate in activities of their own choosing. Since children range in age from 6 weeks to 12 years, staff provide the appropriate amounts of guidance in this process. Each of the programs is made up of a number of components. Staff monitor the number of children in each area at all times, to avoid overcrowding and disrupted play.

2. Outdoor Play

Westgate Heights provides a very large, accessible and enclosed area for outdoor fun and activities. Since fresh air and exercise are essential to growing, healthy minds and bodies children will have regular outdoor play. Exceptions include:

- Outdoor temperatures in excess of +35 C.
- Outdoor temperatures (including wind-chill) below -25 C.
- Any other conditions where the children's safety will be in question.

3. Structured Activities

Auditorium

- Westgate Heights has a large auditorium where children can explore creative movement and participate in gross motor or large muscle games and activities.

Circle Time

- Each day, the children participate in a structured learning time. These “circle times” expose children to crafts, literature, drama, music, science and sensory experiences, fine motor activities and communication times.

Preschool Program

- Structured activities for three - five year olds are more involved and incorporate various developmental skills, including: visual and auditory discrimination, numerals, letters, colors, shapes and name printing.

4. Television Viewing

In general, the children will not watch television at the Centre. On special occasions, however, some television viewing (especially educational programs or programs related to a specific theme) may be permitted with the prior approval of the Director or designate.

5. Rest Periods

Cribs are provided for all infants and individual mats are provided for toddlers and preschoolers. The Centre provides a sheet for each child. Parents are asked to bring a small blanket for their child. Ideally, it will be a blanket that can be left at the Centre. This bedding will be laundered on a weekly basis or as needed. If you wish to do your own child's laundry please make staff aware of this. The children relax in quiet; secure environments for varying time periods, dependent upon their ages.

- Infants have a separate sleep room. Sleep times vary depending on the age and needs of the infant.
- Toddlers rest on mats for one or two hours, immediately following lunch.
- Preschoolers have a rest period of 15 minutes to two hours long.

6. Field Trips

Periodically, children are taken on excursions outside the Centre. These special outings usually coincide with the monthly themes. Parents (and approved volunteers) are welcome to join us on field trips. Notice of fieldtrips will be given in advance and will be subject to adequate supervision.

Volunteers

Westgate Heights encourages volunteers to enhance various aspects of our programming. All volunteers are interviewed and closely supervised by the Director and staff.

7. Timetable

Following is a typical schedule of daily activities:

7:30 am	Centre opens - activity areas open for play
9:15 – 9:30	Snack Time
9:30 – 10:15	Circle Time
10:15 – 11:30	Outdoor play (weather permitting)
11:30- 12:00	Lunch time
12:00 - 2:30	Quiet time
3:00 – 3:30	Snack time
3:30 – 5:30	Free choice activities (may include outdoor time)

H. SUBSIDY

Saskatchewan Social Services may provide a subsidy for parents using government licensed day care services. The subsidy is based on the parent's income, the number of children in the family and the day care fee. For information regarding Centre subsidy, you may check with the Director or call the toll-free number for the Centre Subsidy Unit in Regina at 1-800-667-7155.

Although the actual subsidies are paid directly to the Centre, it is the parents' responsibility to supply any information required by the Centre Subsidy Division.

Parents receiving subsidy are responsible to the Centre for ensuring full payment of fees, either by themselves or by the Centre Subsidy Unit. Parents will be required to pay full fees until the subsidy is approved. As well all families are solely responsible for ensuring they have enough hours (min. 36) for their subsidy payment to be made. If they do not qualify for subsidy, they become responsible for payment of the full fee.

I. THINGS TO BRING ON THE FIRST DAY:

All children must have the following items available:

1. A complete change of clothing
2. Runners (or other soft soled shoes)
3. A copy of their immunization record
4. Suitable outdoor clothing (all seasons)
5. A cuddly toy for sleeping with
6. A favorite, small blanket
7. Disposable diapers and/or training garments in sufficient quantity to cover a two-day period

Note:

It is a good idea to provide 2 changes of clothing for toddlers (3 if they are toilet training)