

COVID-19 Policies & Guidelines

Updated: February 12, 2021

First Steps Preschool is licensed by the Fraser Health Authority. All health and safety guidelines are created to align with the rules, regulations, and recommendations from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Provincial Health Authority, and Fraser Health Authority. All licensed child care facilities in our province are provided the same guidelines and recommendations.

Changes to First Steps Preschool health policies and teaching program are being implemented to reflect the most current COVID-19 guidelines. It is important for First Steps Preschool to remain adaptable and ready to change and implement any updated guidelines given by any level of the government.

Information for families can be found on the BC Centre for Disease Control website.

For the well-being of staff, children, and families, it is important to respect and acknowledge that all the policies and guidelines outlined in this document have been created to ensure First Steps Preschool operates in the safest manner possible. We sincerely appreciate your understanding and respect of these policies and guidelines during the pandemic.

Arrival & Departure

All children will be dropped-off and picked-up outside in the church courtyard. Please wait at a visual marker located on the windows, maintaining physical distance from other families.

Children **must** be accompanied by an adult to the preschool and wait with the child until he/she is greeted by the teacher.

Arrival

Please wait with your child by one of the visual markers on the windows outside in the courtyard. There are 10 markers on the left side of the doors, and also 10 markers on the right side of the door. The markers are not assigned to an individual child.

A teacher will greet one child at a time. Teachers will conduct a daily health check by asking parents and caregivers to confirm that their child does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease. The list of questions

being asked will be posted on the courtyard door. Please familiarize yourself with these following questions:

1. Does your child have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease?

Key Symptoms:

Fever (above 38°C)
Chills
Cough
Difficulty breathing
Loss of sense of smell or taste

What to do:

If yes to 1 or more key symptoms:
Stay home and get a health assessment.
Contact a health care provider or 8-1-1 about your symptoms and next steps.

Other Symptoms:

Sore throat
Loss of appetite
Headache
Body aches
Extreme fatigue or tiredness
Diarrhea
Nausea
Vomiting

What to do:

If YES to 1 symptom, stay home until feeling better

If YES to 2 or more symptoms, stay home for 24 hours. If symptoms don't improve or become worse, get a health assessment, contact a health care provider or 8-1-1 about your symptoms and next steps.

2. Has your child returned from travel outside Canada, including the United States, in the last 14 days?
3. Has anyone in your household been contacted by public health and notified that they are a close contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19?
4. Has your child, or any member of your household, been directed to self-isolate by public health?
5. Is your child, or anyone in your household, awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test?

Answering “YES” to any of the above questions will require further questioning by a teacher prior to your child attending preschool.

After the verbal health screening, your child will be brought by a different teacher to organize their belongings into their hallway cubby. Please limit belongings to essential items only. Comfort items may come to preschool if they are clean and laundered at the end of each day.

Children will wash their hands in the classroom washroom before sitting on their circle mat for Helping Hand and Show & Tell. Children will always be supervised.

All parents/caregivers whom enter the church facility will be asked to wear a non-surgical mask and sanitize their hands upon entry. If you do not have a mask, we will provide you with one. Parents/caregivers should maintain physical distance from staff and other children in the classroom or hallway area.

Parents or caregivers that are symptomatic MUST NOT enter the church building.

Departure

Children will be dismissed to parents/guardians in the courtyard one by one. This will occur in no particular order. Please maintain physical distance while waiting for your child to be dismissed to you. If we need to connect with you about our day, we will dismiss your child closer to the end.

All communications about our day will be posted on the main courtyard door.

Physical Distancing Measures

Physical distancing with young children in a preschool setting is not emotionally safe or developmentally appropriate. Children require physical connection for their mental and physical well-being.

For this reason, it is important for all preschool families to understand that First Steps will not be keeping children and staff from physical connection. This being said, First Steps, under the guidance of Health Authorities, has made intentional changes to our classroom, program, and activities to allow for more space and flow to minimize unnecessary physical contact between children and teachers. All physical distancing measures will be done in an age-appropriate manner corresponding with risk, as outlined by the BC Ministry of Health.

Illness

This COVID-19 policy is in addition to our general illness policy. All First Steps staff and volunteers will follow this policy.

As directed by Fraser Health Authority, all children should stay home and **not** attend preschool if they:

1. have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, OR
2. travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days, OR
3. had close contact with a confirmed case or outbreak of COVID-19 and/or have been directed to self-isolate by public health, OR
4. awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.

Parents and caregivers should daily assess themselves and their child(ren) before bringing them to preschool. Self-assessment tool at <https://bc.thrive.health> or call 8-1-1.

Children and staff with seasonal allergies do not need to stay home. If the allergy symptoms are the same as they usually are during this time of the year (e.g. itchy eyes, runny nose) and can be relieved with antihistamine or allergy medication, then no specific action is needed.

Masks & PPE

CDC and Provincial Health Services Authority have not mandated that children wear masks while attending preschool. Masks may be irritating to children and this could lead to increased touching of their face and eyes. If a family would prefer to have their child wear a mask while attending preschool, please communicate this choice to our staff.

All adult visitors will be required to wear a mask when entering the classroom and wherever social distancing is not possible. If you know that you will be entering the classroom, we ask that you bring your own mask. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided.

Current COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings states that:

Child care staff and other adults should wear a mask when indoors and interacting with other adults except when

- *they can consistently maintain physical distance, or*
- *there is a barrier in place, or*
- *eating and drinking.*

Non-surgical masks may only provide limited protective value for adult-child interactions in child care settings, as there are multiple effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in place and young children are less likely to be infected. Child care staff and other adults may choose to wear a mask indoors when engaging in prolonged, close interaction with children. Careful consideration should be given to the potential impact of mask wearing on visual cueing and non-verbal communication with children, as these interactions play an important role in learning and development.

Our teachers will wear masks during most of our indoor time. This will allow us to align with our church facility policy on non-surgical masks wearing as well as adhere to Fraser Health's strong recommendations for ECE teachers to wear masks while in the classroom.

Teachers will wear disposable gloves when cleaning body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine, blood) and when diapering.

Hand Hygiene

Preschool aged children are just forming healthy habits. All children will be taught proper hand hygiene while at preschool. Hand washing will be done with liquid soap, for a minimum of 20 seconds, on all parts of the hands and fingers. Hands will be rinsed with water and dried with disposable paper towels.

Hand sanitizer will only be used when soap and water are not available. Only Health Canada approved alcohol-based hand sanitizers will be used on children, under direct adult supervision. Hand sanitizer products will be stored safely away from children.

Children will practice proper hand hygiene upon arrival and prior to dismissal, before and after play time, eating, outdoor play, and using the toilet. We also ask children to wash hands after using a tissue, coughing, sneezing, and when hands are visually dirty.

Staff will also be following, at a minimum, the same guidelines as the children. Any parent/visitor will be asked to wash their hands upon entry to the classroom.

Cleaning & Disinfection

Following the current Health Authority guidelines for disinfection and cleaning, First Steps Preschool will disinfect using a bleach solution. Due to the frequency of disinfecting and sanitization, any items that enter the preschool may be at risk of damage (wear/tear/colour degradation), for which First Steps is not responsible.

Any amendments or changes to our cleaning, disinfection, or sanitization will be posted on the parent notice board or communicated in our monthly newsletters.

We ask that parents and caregivers familiarize themselves with the Provincial documents summarizing COVID-19 facts as they pertain to early care and learning environments. This can be found at the following link: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care>

Our daily cleaning/disinfection schedule and procedures will be in accordance with the BC CDC's Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings document. This will include, but won't be limited to:

- General cleaning and disinfecting of the classroom at least once every 24 hours (e.g., hallway cubbies, floor mats, chairs).
- Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, faucet handles, chairs, tables, light switches) will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice every 24 hours.
- Soft toy, or hard to clean toys have been removed from the classroom.
- Toys and activities will be cleaned at the end of each day. If a toy/activity is not able to be disinfected it will remain out of circulation for 72hrs.
- Toys and activities will not be used between each child group. Each group will have its own set of toys/activities (i.e.: beads, craft supplies, fine motor bins).
- Any item or toy that is placed in a child's mouth will immediately be removed and disinfected.

Visitors

Parents, caregivers, health-care providers, volunteers, and other non-staff adults (e.g., visitors) entering our classroom will be limited to those supporting activities that are of benefit to children's learning and wellbeing.

All visitors must provide active confirmation (e.g., sign in at entry, e-mail before entry, etc.) that they have no symptoms of illness and are not required to self-isolate before entering. All adult visitors should wear a mask, follow social distancing measures, and practice proper hand hygiene when entering the classroom.

All visitors will be recorded in our Visitor Log.

Registration & Fees

Fees will not be charged for closures due to COVID-19. All children will remain registered in their program during the closure.

Fees will not be refunded due to absence, illness or required self-isolation. If a withdrawal is required, written notification must be provided.

Snack & Lunch

Children will wash hands prior to and after eating snack and lunch. We will adequately space children apart, seating only 3-4 children per table, as it is recommended children sit across from each other, and not side by side.

All tables and chairs will be disinfected with a Heath Canada approved cleaning agent before and after eating.

No food items, cups, or utensils are shared between children.

Any reusable dishware, glasses, and utensils belonging to the preschool which are used by a child, will be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very exciting for children and we continue to celebrate birthdays at preschool. Your child will receive a card, sticker, bookmark, and birthday crown/hat from the teachers. If you wish to send a birthday treat with your child to share with their classmates, we request for this school year, all treats must be pre-packaged, or store bought. **All treats must be NUT FREE.** Treats don't have to be edible; they can be something small (i.e.: pencil, sticker, mini playdough). All birthday treats will be sent home at dismissal for parents to decide when they can be opened.

Birthday treats are always optional.

Field Trips

At this time, we will not be organizing field trips that would take us off church property. We will continue to enrich our preschool program by other means and experiences.

Helping Hand and Show & Tell

Helping Hand will now be combined with Show & Tell. One child will have this role during each class. There will be a designated bag for each day of the week and that bag will be washed after each child has used it for sharing. The child may bring 1 or 2 items from home that are interesting to them.

At this time, **we are not able** to welcome parents or caregivers of the “Special Helper” into the classroom to participate and watch their child. Teachers are happy to take a few pictures or record a short video and send it to families. Just let us know!

Ventilation & Outdoor Play

Children will play outdoors whenever possible. Please send your child to preschool with weather appropriate shoes, boots, and jackets. We ask that all clothing items be labeled with your child’s name. All clothing items will be sent home at the end of each day.

Outdoor time will not be limited to physical activity. When the weather permits, we may use outdoor space for learning activities, circle-time, discovery walks, or snack time.

To ensure adequate ventilation, windows and doors may be opened when it is deemed safe and/or necessary to do so.

Helpful resources for families:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-and-children/keeping-children-safe>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/priority-populations/children-with-immune-suppression>

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance_Child_Ca

[re.pdf](#)

Self-Assessment Tool:

<https://bc.thrive.health/>