

Parent and Guardian Handbook

Policies & Procedures



September 2022 - August 2023

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Licensing

La Maison Montessori Comox is licensed by the Ministry of Education as a Family Child Care Facility. Our facility is monitored and inspected by regional health authorities ensuring that we are meeting specific requirements for health and safety, staffing qualifications, record keeping, space and equipment, child-to-staff ratios, and programming.

Our license allows us to have a maximum group size of 7 children and one adult.

Location

La Maison Montessori Comox is located in Courtenay at 1936 Bates Rd.

Program Statement

La Maison Montessori Comox Valley (La MMCV) emphasizes active learning as children learn best by working with their hands and by pursuing their personal interests. Our children have the opportunity to make their own choices about materials and activities during program time. As our students pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, make connections, and interact with peers and staff. We view children as fully capable human beings that are competent, curious and rich in potential. La MMCV provides an environment that fosters children's ability to grow and develop in a safe and caring manner. We understand the importance of taking children's stages of development and their unique family, community, and life experiences into consideration; thus our teachers pride themselves on providing each student with an

individualized program. In each case, we aim to integrate all areas of the child's development into our program in a holistic and nurturing way.

Curriculum Goals and Approaches

Promote the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of our students:

Keeping our students healthy and safe is a priority at La MMCV, and we recognize that the well-being of their child is a parent's #1 concern. In coordination with the Ministry's health and safety guidelines, we ensure to uphold strict health and safety practices and these policies are reviewed on an annual basis. Updates are made when necessary.

Some of our practices include:

- Health checks of each child upon arrival
- Sanitation and disinfection procedures
- Hand washing upon arrival for staff and children, before and after snacks and meals, after toileting, after outdoor time and before pick up
- varied and nutritious snacks and lunches are provided in accordance with new Canadian Food Guide
- Safe supervisions of children at all times
- Standard First Aid and infant and child CPR training

Supporting Relationships:

A positive and supportive relationship between our students and educators is crucial. Young children flourish in all areas of their development when they are in a positive and responsive relationship with adults. La MMCV supports positive relationships by:

- We build a foundation of trust with our students by being available, sensitive, responsive, and caring. This is how trust is built and ensures that children feel safe, valued and secure. From this platform, relationships are made so that children are able to explore, discover, take risks, try new things, grow, develop, and learn.
- Supporting the role of the parent through daily communications through the app Seesaw
- Providing a safe environment by preparing spaces that are inviting and conducive to learning.
- Actively participating in each student's learning and play experiences through observation and documenting the milestones, in order to ensure age-appropriate development.
- Ensuring an inclusive and respectful learning environment

Encourage our students to interact and communicate in a positive way and to support their ability to self-regulate:

The ability to express thoughts, emotions, needs, and wants is an essential part of healthy growth and development for children. Children who are able to express themselves in a variety of ways feel more competent, understood by others, are developing self-regulation, and can communicate more effectively. It is our role as educators to support each student in learning how to effectively interact with the world around them including their peers, adults, and their environment. Some of the approaches implemented at La MMC to set the stage for positive interactions include:

- Teachers model appropriate behaviours and support child to child interactions when conflict arises
- The skills of conflict resolution are important to lifelong learning. As competent individuals, children are active participants in resolving interpersonal conflicts. Teachers encourage students to come up with ideas and solutions to problems that arise and guide and assist the process as needed.
- Comfort and nurturing are provided when children are needing help or just want a cuddle
- We help children to develop self-awareness, learn how to recognize feelings in themselves and others, and build a "toolbox" of strategies that can help them to calm their emotions and find accepted ways to express themselves.

Foster the child's exploration, educational play, and inquiry:

Play is the work of children.

The negative connotations we associate with work cause us to possibly look too harsh upon the use of the term "work" in the Montessori environment however this is what we call it.

"If you watch a child of three, you will see that he is always playing with something. This means he is working it out, and making conscious, something that his unconscious mind has earlier absorbed. Through this outward experience, in the guise of a game, he examines those things and impressions that he has taken in unconsciously. He becomes fully conscious and constructs the future man, by means of his activities...He does it with his hands, by experience, first in play and then through work." (The Absorbent Mind, p. 27 Maria Montessori)

The Montessori method of teaching, along with the Montessori materials, naturally encourage students to actively build, challenge, and expand their own understandings of the world around them, making important connections and therefore opening endless possibilities to new learning. The manipulation of Montessori materials is responsive to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on their innate curiosity to learn.

You will find our Montessori Classroom rich with age-appropriate, manipulative Montessori materials and resources for our students to use as they construct ideas, try out hypotheses, and explore new and interesting materials.

Montessori materials are carefully thought out, interconnected and often self-correcting. They have specific requirements to be classified as "Montessori". The requirements depend upon the curriculum area that they are found in.

5 areas of Montessori's curriculum

French will be the main language of instruction throughout the day so to create an immersed environment for the children. Our classroom is thoughtfully prepared and has a designated area for each of these domains:

Practical Life

Practical life activities are an increasingly challenging series of motor tasks involving practical real-life goals such as cleaning a table, washing a plate, or pouring water from a pitcher. In addition to helping children master everyday tasks, the aim of practical life activities is to develop a child's independence, body control, and coordination of movement, concentration, and sense of order. These activities focus on providing children with healthy work habits, a strong character and attitude toward social relationships, and a love and respect towards their environment.

Some characteristics of materials used in this environment are real objects and child size. The material must serve a useful purpose as they provide children with a sense of importance so they know that they are doing real and necessary work.

Example activities:

- Pouring beans from pitcher to pitcher, transfering dry lentils with a spoon from bowl to bowl, transferring water with a sponge, serving themselves at lunch time, washing their own dishes, preparing a snack or lunch for their classmates, sweeping, watering plants, sewing, cooking and baking, and much more.

Sensorial

The sensorial curriculum is unique to Montessori. It involves the refinement of the child's senses through repeated manipulation of specifically designed materials. These materials isolate and provide concrete examples of abstract concepts that are perceived through the senses such as dimension, form, colour, texture, sound, and scent. Sensorial education is intended to provide the child with a structure and vocabulary for information received through the senses. This helps with classifying and categorizing the world around them. While refining their senses, the child is also developing their concentration, sense of order, and their intellect.

Some characteristics of materials used in this section are that each material is designed to fulfill a specific educational task, they provide children with concrete examples of abstract

concepts, each material isolates a single property, each material progresses from simple to complex, many of the materials have a control of error built into their design, the properties that the materials isolate are universal.

Example activities:

 Knobbed cylinders, the pink tower, the brown stair, the red rods, the colour tablets, the geometric cabinet, the constructive triangles, the binomial cube, the trinomial cube, touch boards, thermic tablets, baric tablets, geometric solids, mystery bag, smelling game, sound cylinders, and more.

Language Arts

The Montessori early childhood environment is a natural extension of the patterns of communication that the child has absorbed from birth. With each new word, conversation, story, song, or poem the child is learning language. In our classroom, the child is consistently given opportunities to build language skills across the Montessori curriculum which will mainly be carried out in French. Vocabulary that is presented or discussed in the different curriculum areas help build the child's use of language and understanding. Working with hands-on materials not only helps to develop fine or gross motor skills and hand-eye coordination but also reinforces connections being made in the brain. Dr. Montessori developed the early childhood language curriculum to focus on multisensorial, incremental learning that respects each child's unique pace and readiness for language development. The four areas we focus on are oral language, writing, reading, and parts of speech.

Some characteristics of materials used in the section are small objects used to isolate phonics, the metal insets with help prepare the hand to write, sandpaper letters which provide a tactile, muscle memory experience to learning the *sounds* of each letter (not letter names), the moveable alphabet, and much more!

Mathematics

In the Montessori program, the child is consistently encouraged to explore concepts and strengthen abilities in order to fully support the math related sensitive periods that they experience around 4 years old. Obviously their mind is unconsciously taking in information with relation to math on a daily basis but it isn't until around 4 that the mind consciously

works with mathematical concepts. The Montessori classroom is set up in such a way that the child is encouraged to think mathematically and develop their mathematical mind. The classroom is orderly and the placement of materials follow a specific order, with simplest and most concrete to the most difficult and abstract. Children will be working on concepts related to the following areas: the concept of Zero, numbers to ten; introduction to the decimal system; four operations; teens, tens, and hundreds; memorization. The activities are presented in a logical and systematic order to help the child continually build on prior knowledge.

Specific Montessori Materials that will be used in mathematics are: the Number Rods, Sandpaper Numbers, the Spindle boxes, the short bead stair, the Golden bead material, the teen and tens boards, and more.

Example activities:

- counting with the Number Rods, tracing the Sandpaper Numbers, numbers and counters, the zero game, associating quantities and numbers, odd and even numbers, building quantities from 0 - 10, 11-19, and 10-90, the decimal system with the golden beads, sequencing numbers, the bank game, the stamp game, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, the dot game, and much more!

Culture and Science

The culture portion of the Montessori classroom is divided into the following sections: geography, history, zoology, botany, and science. This methodology sees science as a part of culture that seeks to test the truthfulness of knowledge and to separate truth from popular beliefs and other types of knowledge that form human culture. In a sense, all children are scientists because they genuinely want to know what is happening around them and within them, and to know why. The first knowledge children accumulate grows from direct experience rather than from guided learning. However, over the course of their education, children absorb an increasing amount of knowledge through presentations and classroom work, as well as from literature and other media.

Specific Montessori materials used are: the Sandpaper Globe, the Continent Globe, puzzle map of the world and continents, land and water forms, animal and plant part puzzles, nomenclature cards, and more.

Example of activities:

- Geography activities encompass learning concepts about land and water, continents and oceans, land and water forms, countries, culture from the different continents, and more.
- History activities will include learning about chronological order starting with the timeline of their day, creating a family tree, timeline of their life, exploring the seasons timeline, the calendar, and learning about famous people.

- Zoology activities begin with understanding living and non-living things, the difference between plants and animals, vertebrates and invertebrates, the five classes of animals, identifying animals around the world, learning external parts of animals, and more.
- Botany activities include plant care, learning the parts of a plant, flowers, fruits, seeds, and more.
- In Science, we will explore concepts such as magnetism, buoyancy, density, volume, solutions, evaporation, chemical reactions, light and colour, and more!

Montessori Area	Overall Learning Goals		
Practical Life	Independence; body control; coordination of movement; concentration; sense of order; healthy work habits; characted development; grace and courtesy		
Sensorial	Refinement of sense - size, dimension, form, colour, texture, temperature, weight, sound, taste, scent; constructing relationships based on sensory information and perception; gross and fine motor development; language skills; visual and auditory discrimination; developing hand-eye coordination; increasing attention span		
Language Arts	Vocabulary development; classification; writing; reading; oral language skills; grammar		
Mathematics	Counting; sorting; patterning; matching; basic operations		
Culture and Science	Find patterns in nature; understanding the truth in the natural world; learning their place in human culture; gaining appreciation for all living things		

Source: https://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2015/02/playful-learning-montessori-environment-part4.html

Consistent with both Dr. Maria Montessori's Philosophy and the Ministry of Education pedagogy our program will also include the following areas:

- visual arts
- drama
- music
- physical education

Our Outdoor Program

Our children will be spending two to three hours in our outdoor play area daily, rain and shine! Dressed appropriately, our children love to jump in puddles and play in the mud. In very poor weather, active play will take place in our Montessori classroom so that children can benefit from the physical activity their bodies require.

Our Daily Rhythm

7:30-8:25: Before care and Drop Off

8:30: Circle time

8:40: Montessori Work period

10:00 - 11:30 : Outdoors **11:30 - 12:00** : Lunch

12:00 - 2:00 : Nap time for nappers

*12:00 - 12:40 : Peace time for non-nappers

12:40 - 2:10: Montessori Work Period

2:10 - 3:30 : Outdoors **3:30 - 5:00** : After care

Snack time - Children can choose to have a snack or drink when they are hungry or thirsty; they do not have to wait for the whole group. A designated "snack table" will have space for one child at a time to enjoy a snack when they are hungry.

Peace time will take place in our Montessori classroom for the duration of 40 minutes for our children who are not napping. Children will lay on their yoga mat for the first 20 minutes with the lights off and calm music playing and focus on deep breathing and silence. The following 20 minutes, children are welcome to look at books on their yoga mat. Once peace time is finished, children will roll up their mats and get ready to head outside.

Communication

Parents will receive regular communication via the app Seesaw. Each child will have their own portfolio which documents their journey through our Montessori program. Photos or notes will be added for parent's viewing. Every 6 months, parent-teacher conferences will be available so we can discuss the child's ability with the materials they have mastered, what they're working on, and what their next steps will be.

We will be reachable during the day by phone and by email after hours.

Catered Meals

Fresh homemade meals are provided daily along with snacks. Most food provided by La Maison Montessori is organic. We do our best to provide a variety of nutritional foods daily along with introducing new items for children to try.

Extended Care Program

Our school day begins promptly at 8:30am and will finish at 3:30pm. Drop off can occur between 7:30-8:25. If you require after care from 3:30-5pm, additional fees will apply.

Payment Information

The hours and days that care can be provided are 7:30am - 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, including holidays, if needed. You will be notified 6 months in advance of vacation periods. Any time over and above the agreed hours of care will be charged as overtime, at an additional rate of \$50 per instance of late pick-up. Each family will be given 3 instances of leniency with late pick-up after which further child care will be denied.

Payment is due monthly or an alternative agreement can be reached.

If your child does not attend for any reason, full payment is still required to hold their spot unless otherwise arranged. Payment for statutory holidays is not required unless you need care for that day. When La Maison Montessori Comox is closed, payment is not required.

The first four weeks are to be an adjustment period and either party may terminate this agreement during that time if the arrangement turns out to be unsatisfactory. Thereafter, 2 weeks notice is required to terminate this agreement. Payment is expected during these 2 weeks even if the child does not attend. Contracts will be reviewed yearly and it is considered valid until a termination of child care notice is issued.

Upon registration, a \$200 deposit will be required to hold your child's spot and will be deducted from your first invoice.

Refund Policy

La MMCV will not grant refunds for prepaid spots. As unforeseen events happen and are sometimes unavailable, refunds can be discussed on a case by case basis with the child care provider, and a refund may be granted at the discretion of the owner.

Parent or Guardian Responsibilities:

Your child will have many opportunities to create and interact with a variety of materials throughout the day. These may take the form of water, clay, gardening, play dough, painting with fingers or brushes, gluing, etc. Please dress your child accordingly to participate fully in all learning experiences. Clothing should allow your child the freedom to move about comfortably and to be able use the toilet independently (if they are no longer in diapers).

Please send TWO complete, labeled, season appropriate change of clothes to be stored in their cubby. This should include two of each: shirts, pants, underwear, and socks. If we use these spare clothes, we will place them on your child's coat hook. You will need to replace them the following day.

Costumes or toys will not be permitted.

What to bring:

- 2 changes of clothes
- yoga mat
- indoor shoes or slippers
- diapers and wipes (if this is applicable)
- sunscreen (if applicable)
- outdoor attire (ie. muddy buddy, rain boots)
- a labeled, reusable water bottle

Arrival and departure

Arrival will take place at the front door. Covid-19 procedures are that parents or guardians must drop their child off at the front door. We will assist your child with their outerwear and changing their shoes once inside. We will take attendance and document what time your child has arrived.

It is best to keep the moment of separation as brief as possible. A positive good-bye and departure will allow your child to move on to regain their composure and enjoy the day. Children will often cry at the beginning of this new routine. They will be okay.

Pick-up will take place from the backyard, weather permitting. Your child's belongings will be outside. Their water bottle is welcome to stay here and we will take care of washing it.

Other Policies

Authorized pick- up

Please notify us if an unauthorized person will be picking up your child. Written permission must be received before we will release a child to anyone who is not authorized on the registration form. A parent or guardian can authorize up to three individuals who can pick up their child from La Maison Montessori Comox Valley.

If the parent, guardian, or authorized person seems unable to provide safe care at the time of pick up (ie. under the influence, no car seats, out of control, etc.) someone else needs to be notified to pick up and care for the child. If an unfit person or an unauthorized person insists on taking the child, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or the police will be notified.

Authorized individuals will be required to present valid government identification to pick up any child from La Maison Montessori Comox.

All parents and guardians must make sure that a staff person recognizes that the child has been dropped off or is being picked up from La MMCV.

Emergency Policy

There is an emergency evacuation policy that is reviewed, practiced, and documented on a regular basis.

In preparing for emergency situations:

- Smoke alarms will be tested monthly
- a first aid kit, an attendance record, a pen or pencil, and an emergency information card for each child and staff member is kept beside the exit door for quick and easy access
- Emergency supplies, including food and water will be kept in the pantry as an easily accessible place. These supplies will be checked and rotated on a regular basis.
- A buddy system will be adopted and practiced
- All staff will know how to work the fire extinguishers, shut off gas lines, hydro, water, and furnace.
- Children will be taught what to do in case of fire or earthquake. Evacuation drills will be practiced on a monthly basis.

- A simple diagram of exit paths from the building to the meeting place will be posted along with emergency phone numbers.
- The designated meeting spot will be assigned and known to all children and parents or guardians.
- In the event of an earthquake, children will be told to stop what they're doing and to cover their heads as we go to find a safe location away from buildings, powerlines, trees, and telephone poles.

Confidentiality Policy

Any information collected on individual children and their families is kept confidential. Information in files may include the following:

- Child's full name
- birth date
- BC Care Card Number
- home address and phone number
- picture of child
- Parent or Guardian's phone numbers
- Emergency Contact information
- Allergies
- Medical information
- Child Care contract
- Registration
- Immunization record
- Copies of permission forms
- Custody information (if applicable)
- Copies of any written communication
- Notes and observations that are dated and do not contain any identifying information about other children or families.

Photos of the children will be taken during the day and shared via Seesaw or social media with your consent.

Screen time Policy

There will be no screen time while your child is in our care. Staff will have cell phones solely to be used for reaching parents or guardians, in case of emergency, and for documentation.

Illness Policy

The health and well-being of the children is our first concern. In order to promote a healthy, positive environment we will ensure:

- proper hygiene is maintained;
- proper precautions are used for dealing with bodily fluids;
- proper hand washing techniques are used by all children and adults;
- families are informed immediately of any outbreak of any contagious diseases

Families must keep their child at home or seek alternate care arrangements for the following situations:

- pain any complaints or unexplained or undiagnosed pain
- difficulty breathing (wheezing or persistent cough)
- fever (100 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C)
- infected skin, eyes, or undiagnosed rash
- unexplained diarrhea or loose stools (may or may not be combined with nausea, vomiting, or stomach cramps). These symptoms may indicate a gastrointestinal infection which is very easily passed from one child to another. These children must be kept home until all symptoms have stopped.
- nausea and vomiting
- severe itching if caused by head or body lice or scabies
- children with known or suspected communicable diseases.

In summary, a child must be kept home (or taken home) when the child is not well enough to take part in the regularly scheduled program.

Appendix B from the British Columbia Centre for Disease control: Daily Health Check Example

The following is an example of a daily health check to determine if you or your child should attend a child care setting that day. Remember, if you think your child is ill, please keep them at home.

Daily Health Check			
 Key Symptoms of Illness 	Do you have any of the following new key symptoms?	CIRCLE ONE	
	Fever	YES	NO
	Chills	YES	NO
	Cough or worsening of chronic cough	YES	NO
	Breathing difficulties (breathing fast or working hard to breathe)	YES	NO
	Loss of sense of smell or taste	YES	NO
	Diarrhea	YES	NO
	Nausea and vomiting	YES	NO
International Trave	Have you returned from travel outside Canada in the last 14 days?	YES	NO
Confirmed Contact	Are you a confirmed contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19?	YES	NO

If the COVID-19 test is positive, self-isolate and follow the direction of public health. If the COVID-19 test is negative, return to the child care facility once well enough to participate.

If a COVID-19 test is recommended but not done, self-isolate for 10 days after the onset of symptoms and return when you or the child are well enough to participate. If a COVID-19 test is not recommended, staff or children may return when well enough to participate.

A health-care provider note (i.e., a doctor's note) should not be required to confirm the health status of any individual. (End of BCCDC Document http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID public guidance/Guidance Child Care.pdf)

Ultimately, the care of a child who is ill is the parent or guardian's responsibility. If your child becomes ill while in our care, we will call you or an authorized person to pick up your child. We will do our best to keep the child comfortable and calm until you arrive. If we believe the situation to be an emergency, an ambulance will be called and you will be contacted immediately. If our staff fall ill, we will do our best to have an alternate. If it is not possible to find an alternate, the child care program will be closed. We will strive to provide you with as much notice as possible. You will not be charged for the days that we cannot provide care. It will be your responsibility to make alternative child care arrangements.

Requirement to Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect

As a citizen of British Columbia, I am required to report any suspicion of neglect or child abuse to the Ministry for Children and Family Development. I will report any abuse that I suspect or abuse that a child discloses to me or that a third party discloses to me. It is not my responsibility to investigate or question the circumstances of the suspected abuse. Neither you, nor anyone else will be informed of my suspicions and subsequent report to the Ministry. It is the Ministry's responsibility to investigate any report and to inform those involved of their investigation. The health and well being of any child is my first priority.