

Parent Handbook

2009-10

Martin-Luther- Kindergarten Ottawa

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(St. Stephen`s Presbyterian Church)

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Herzlich Willkommen im Martin-Luther-Kindergarten!

The purpose of this handbook is to clearly define the goals, guidelines, and overall operation of our program.

In addition, we hope this handbook will give you a good understanding of the rhythms of the Kindergarten.

While the handbook attempts to cover most areas, if you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact our supervisor Simone Ueberfeldt.

We wish your family a successful year in 2009-10!

Background information

The Martin Luther Kindergarten is an essential part of the German Evangelical Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc. Although belonging to our church that is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), the educational focus of the Kindergarten is interdenominational and does not focus on teaching of certain religious or denominational convictions.

The Kindergarten conforms to German Kindergarten models.

We have rented cheerful, friendly and well-lit premises at St. Stephens's Church on Parkdale Avenue. These includes a big hall , which adapts readily for indoor games, rhythm and musical exercise space. In addition we have an adjacent fenced playground, where children will play on a daily basis.

Our supervisor (ECE certified) was trained in Germany as an Elementary School teacher. In addition she has worked with Preschool children in Germany and Canada and has extensive experience in the profession.

She conducts the program in German but is fully fluent in English. The assistant teacher's mother tongue is German as well.

Program

From September to June, the Martin Luther Kindergarten offers daily program (closing days according to the OCDSB) from 8:30 to 1pm Monday to Friday.

The monthly fee is \$ 440.00.

Depending on space available part-time registration is possible.

(4 days- \$ 360.00, 3 days- \$ 270.00, 2 days- \$ 180).

Children must be 30 months old (ask us for exceptions) and should be toilet trained. The teacher / child ratio is 1:8. Currently there is a maximum of 16 children in the kindergarten.

The normal daily schedule is as follows:

- 8:30-9:00** Welcome assembly and supervised play
- 9:00-10:00** Child-directed play, arts and craft, small group games, etc.
- 10:00-10:30** Circle time with special themes
- 10:30-11:00** Snack time (***a healthy, nut, legume and egg-free snack provided by the parents***)
- 11:00-11:30** Quiet time (reading, writing, puzzles, etc.)
- 11:30-12:00** Circle time with special themes
- 12:00-1:00** Rhythm, movement, gymnastic, outdoor time (playground, park)

Objectives

We wish to make it possible for children in Ottawa to acquire basic German-speaking skills in a friendly and playful environment, developing language ability by daily practice. The ability to speak German is **NOT** a prerequisite for children (and parents) in order to get admitted to our kindergarten. As experience shows, children understand and speak the "official" kindergarten language within only a few weeks.

Given the age range within the small group of 12-16 children, each child also finds an excellent opportunity for the acquisition of social skills, developing unselfish behaviour and courtesy while learning from and with their peers.

The Children also participate in activities related to the church year and are especially invited to family services at the German Martin Luther Church (e.g. at Easter, annual Open Air Service, Thanksgiving, St. Martin`s Day, and Christmas). During our program, children also listen to some essential biblical stories and start snack-time with a grace.

Our program is based on a Christian lifestyle with consideration for others, regardless of their culture or religion. There will also be lessons about the environment, about healthy eating habits and hygiene.

All children will be appropriately prepared to enter the Canadian school system.

Program Curriculum

The curriculum for the program is planned by the kindergarten teacher. Programs to be followed during the school year include music, arts, crafts and reading, development of recognition of numbers and the alphabet, as well as teaching of coordinated movement. There is also creative play, projects, cooperative work in small and large groups, festivities and celebrations. The room is set up to include stations for building block activities, puppet shows, a reading corner etc. to allow concurrent activities in the one class area. Parents are welcome to assist at any time.

The program has a set weekly schedule, which serves as a guideline for our activities. Flexibility is key component of the program and any new learning opportunities that arise are readily incorporated into the curriculum.

Programs might become adjusted so that every child can participate. The activities are developmentally appropriate for each of the different age groups and include both child-directed and teacher-directed activities. During free play times children choose their own activities from all areas. During structured times teachers include letter and number recognition, singing, instruments, finger play, stories and games. Variations of the schedule (field trips etc.) are possible and kept on the daily attendance record.

Pedagogical Background

The aim of the Martin Luther Kindergarten program is to provide a strong foundation from which students can grow into lifelong learning. By participating in the Kindergarten Program children will:

- develop confidence in themselves and their ability to learn
- demonstrate curiosity and the ability to focus their attention
- acquire a level of communicative competence that is personally satisfying
- remain true to their individual natures, being free to develop their own potentials
- acquire social skills and abilities which enable them to relate to other children and to adults.
- develop their German language skills
- get involved and connected to traditional and religious activities/ festivities within the German speaking culture

The pedagogical program of the Martin Luther Kindergarten includes lots of learning activities. Children will be well prepared for the 1st grade of elementary school.

Learning German

The Kindergarten Board of Directors consists of German speaking members and the pastor of the German Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc.

Our ECE certified teacher is a native from Germany. There she obtained her degree as an elementary school teacher. In addition she has ample teaching experiences with preschool children both in Europe and Canada (e.g. The Montessori Parkdale School). She as well as her assistant (a German native speaker as well) are both fluent in English but will almost exclusively speak German with the children.

For those children growing up in a German speaking environment, this policy makes it possible to use and improve their language skills in the kindergarten program. Those children who don't speak German yet when entering the kindergarten are provided with a solid foundation for the acquisition of the German language in an early stage of childhood.

However, parents of children who are exclusively English speaking at home should not expect any "language miracles". It has been proven that children who are attending a kindergarten program in another language acquire an excellent listening understanding. Just attending a kindergarten program, however, is insufficient in order to enable a child to permanently and actively speak a second language. In fact, the home environment is decisive in achieving active language skills. A kindergarten program in another language will, nonetheless, provide a firm foundation for further studies in this language. Children will then easily acquire reading and writing skills as well as an active vocabulary.

Staff

Our current supervisor Simone Ueberfeldt was trained as an elementary school teacher in Bielefeld, Germany. She lives with her family in Ottawa since 2005. After she finished her education she worked in several elementary schools in Germany as a teacher. In addition she was responsible for teaching a special "German language program" in Preschools. Since moving to Canada she worked as an Early Music Educator for several home daycares in Ottawa as well as for the Parkdale Montessori School. Simone is married and has one three-year old daughter.

Our second kindergarten teacher, Sonja Zaphiropolous, came to Canada many years ago and has been working in several areas since then. She is married and has two children. For many years she has been the beloved Sunday School Teacher of the German Martin Luther Church.

Administration

Members of the Martin-Luther Church of Ottawa Inc. and other volunteers initiated and founded the Martin-Luther-Kindergarten in 2006. Policy, budget and hiring staff are the responsibility of the Board of Directors which is supervised by the German Martin Luther Church of Ottawa Inc. The kindergarten treasurer is chosen by the kindergarten board of directors and under its supervision. The pedagogical program and the daily operation of the kindergarten is the responsibility of the supervising ECE-teacher in cooperation with the Board of Directors.

Licensing and Standards

The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Children's Services Division, licenses the Martin Luther Kindergarten. The Day Nurseries Act sets standards for health and safety, fire protection and qualified staff and equipment. The license permits an enrolment of up to 16 children, ages 30 months to 5 years per year (with some exceptions). Annual inspections are made by a Program Supervisor from the MCSS, a Fire Inspector and a Health Inspector from the Regional Health Unit.

Closures and Holidays

The kindergarten follows the schedule of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board and its holidays. This means school year starts mostly in September on Tuesday after Labour Day and continues until the 3rd week of June. The kindergarten is closed on the following days: Thanksgiving, Ottawa-Carleton District Board of Education Christmas Break and March Break, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day.

Registration

Registration starts on March 1st on "first come, first serve" basis. Pre- registration is available to current and previous parents in the program. A 50.00 \$ non-refundable registration fee must accompany the registration form. In addition, a cheque post-dated to July 1st of the actual year must be submitted at the time of registration, covering the total individual fee for September (payable to "Martin Luther Kindergarten"). In case of withdrawal from the program after July 1st, the fee for September 2009 can only be refunded if the space can be filled otherwise. On the first day of the kindergarten program in September, post-dated cheques (payable to "Martin Luther Kindergarten") for the remaining school year (October through June) must be submitted to the kindergarten (redeemable on the 1st of each month). The

Regional Health Department requires that all children enrolled in the program must have proof of up-to-date immunization.

The children are gradually integrated into the program during the month of September.

The Board of Directors reserves the right to cancel the program due to insufficient enrolment. In addition, changes to admission to the program are at the discretion of the Board. Space permitting, registration is ongoing throughout the school year.

Refunds & Tax receipts

No refunds will be given for holidays, scheduled closures, illness or if the Martin Luther Kindergarten is closed due to unforeseen circumstances such as utility failure or a severe storm. In the event of an extended absence from the program, the Martin Luther Kindergarten cannot offer a rebate or reduction in fees.

There will be a \$15.00 fee for NSF cheques, payable in cash within a week`s notice. Tax receipts for paid fees are available upon request.

Withdrawals

The Board must receive from the parent one month`s advance written notice of withdrawal from the program. This notice must be received by the Board no later than the first day of the month before the month of withdrawal whereupon the remaining post-dated cheques will be returned. If one month`s notice (as of the first of the month) is not given, one month`s cheque will be withheld and the remaining cheques will be returned. Cheques will not be returned for withdrawals requested after April 30th.

The Board of Directors, upon recommendation of the Supervisor, reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child from the program due to behavioural problems. A parent has the right to appeal this decision and must request, in writing, a meeting with the Board of Directors and the teaching staff.

The first Day- Introducing your child to the program

This may be your child`s first experience in a group setting on their own.

Children react differently to separating from their parent and/or caregiver. Our goal is to make your child`s entry into the program as comfortable and positive as possible.

The following suggestions may help the transition into the program for both you and your child.

- Explore the environment together. Allow your child to hold your hand and walk around the room looking at activities. As your child becomes more comfortable, begin to move away. If you station yourself in one area, your child will know where you are and will begin to explore from the secure base you provide.
- If your child would like to participate in an activity, join in if your company is requested by your child.
- Some children prefer to watch other children at play. In this case, sit down with your child and talk quietly about what you are seeing. Please do not pressure the child to join in. Participation will come when your child feels comfortable.
- When your child appears happy and comfortable feel free to leave. Please say goodbye to your child and inform the teacher that you're leaving.
- Sometimes a child will cry for a few minutes after a parent leaves the room. If you are concerned about this, please wait in a nearby area where we can call you if necessary. The kindergarten teachers are aware of and sympathetic to these separation problems and are willing to help and guide you and your child.
- Experience has taught that starting school is less confusing if the children are phased in gradually. Plan to spend some time integrating your child into the program, slowly if necessary. Some children will be fine if you leave after the first visit, others will need more time.

Behaviour and Guidance

The Martin Luther Kindergarten encourages children to play within a few definite and known limits. They are expected to:

- be friendly with others
- use words instead of hands to settle arguments
- respect other children's creations
- walk indoors
- use quieter voices indoors than outdoors
- help to tidy up
- sit to eat and drink

The teachers reward acceptable behaviour verbally and redirect or ignore unacceptable behaviour. A child whose behaviour is continually unacceptable is withdrawn from the group and told kindly but firmly why the behaviour is unacceptable.

The Day Nurseries Act of Ontario, under which the kindergarten is licensed, prohibits corporal punishment or deliberate, harsh or degrading measures which would humiliate or undermine a child's self-respect.

Health and Medication

The Martin Luther Kindergarten currently is a nut, legume and egg-free environment and consequently enforces a nut, legume and egg-free policy. Since we currently have children with nut, legume and egg allergies in the program, snacks that may contain nuts, legumes or eggs must not be provided.

All immunization information MUST be received prior to the child being admitted into the program (photocopy of the yellow immunization card).

Health regulations state that parents not send their child to kindergarten if the child has had one of the following within the last 48 hours:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhoea

Teachers check the children as they arrive for signs of illness. If a child appears ill, kindergarten teachers will call the parents to pick up the child immediately. Please report to the supervisor all communicable diseases (e.g. chicken pox, head lice, conjunctivitis, impetigo) or if a child has experienced vomiting or diarrhoea.

No medication or drugs will be administered or kept at the school. The only exception to this policy is for life-threatening allergies, .i.e. Epipens or Benadryl that are supplied by the parents. A doctor`s letter is required for the teacher to administer this medication.

Clothing

Children should wear clothing that is simple, comfortable and washable. They should also have a pair of rubber-soled shoes that can be left at the school and a change of clothes in their backpack. Please label all items, including shoes.

Drop off and Pick up

Children should not be left at the kindergarten until a staff member has been made aware of their presence. Children must be picked up on time. A child waiting may become anxious or lonely. The teacher cannot release a child to someone other than a parent without parent`s permission. Please notify the kindergarten staff if someone other than a parent is to pick up your child.

Fire, Safety and Emergencies

As per fire department regulations, fire drills are conducted with the children on a monthly basis.

In case of an emergency, your child will be taken to the nearest medical facility. Your Signature on the registration form indicates your acceptance of this arrangement.

If it is necessary to evacuate the building due to fire or emergency, the children will be taken to the

St. Matthias Anglican Church, 555 Parkdale Avenue, Phone: 613-728-3996. Parents will be notified as soon as possible.