



Links2Care

**Parent Handbook
and
Registration Package
2023-2024 School Year**

School-Age Program Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Welcome

On behalf of our organization, we want to welcome you to Links2Care. We are very pleased that you have chosen us to care for your child before and/or after school. We take pride in our programs and we hope that you are completely satisfied with our service.

Links2Care is a community-based, non-profit organization that offers services for children, adults and seniors throughout Halton and Mississauga. For more information about the programs and services Links2Care offers please visit our website at www.links2care.ca.

Links2Care School-Age Program offers before and after school care at Park Public School and Joseph Gibbons Public School for those children aged 3 years (JK) to 12 years (grade 5).

The educators at Links2Care School-Age Program are dedicated to offering quality school-age childcare that will facilitate the growth and development of your child for the future. Links2Care actively participates in Quality First. Quality First is a quality early learning initiative providing all licensed childcare programs in Halton Region with coaching, consultation and opportunities to participate in professional learning for quality improvement.

It is our sincere hope that you feel welcomed and supported as parents and partners of our organization and that your children feel safe and secure as they are inspired to play, learn and develop. We value your input and encourage your questions, ideas and feedback.

Sincerely,

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Program Statement

Our School-Age Program strives to deliver stimulating learning experiences in a safe, positive learning environment that enhances children's social, intellectual, physical and emotional development. Play is the cornerstone of our curriculum – our curriculum is built around children's questions, interests and ideas. Links2Care School-Age curriculum takes a child-initiated, adult-supported approach that focuses on play-based learning fostering children's exploration, play and inquiry. We allow the child to take the lead and then focus on his or her interests through intentional observations, interactions and engaged communications. Teachers ask the children what types of materials/items, games and challenges they would like to have in the program. Teachers support this process with following through on requests bringing in a variety of different materials; bring in loose parts into the program and participating in the children's activities. Teachers validate the children's ideas and their interests so children can have a sense of belonging and take pride in the program they are a part of.

We know that children flourish in all areas of development when they are in supportive, caring, responsive relationships with adults whose focus is on health, safety, nutrition and the well-being of children in an environment that includes indoor and outdoor play as well as active and quiet time. We reflect on children's interests, ask questions about the world around them and encourage them to explore their environment. We ask questions to allow the children to tell us how we can help and support them. It is important that children can feel confident in themselves when making choices from their health and safety to their well-being. Teachers promote and role model the expected behavior when socializing with peers to washing hands before snack. Our educators encourage each child's developing sense of self, and their ability to see themselves as being competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential. Links2Care provides inclusive programming for all children. Our staff work closely with parents and school personnel, and link to other community partners who support children, to ensure the appropriate supports and resources are in place to ensure optimal success for all children. We realize that some children may need individual care and space at times throughout the program. Teachers will do their best to support children during these times and reflect on the child's interests, how they are feeling and if they would like to have some alone time. Materials are provided to children to make a safe and comfortable area that they can call their own space to support them during this time.

We encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate. Teachers support children when they need to communicate and how they can say it in a way their peers will understand and support them during problem solving situations or compromise during activities. Teachers have the children reflect on what is the goal and the outcome of the discussion they are having with their peer and work together to a solution. If some children need more time to help self-regulate during difficult times teachers will support by allowing children to take part in a breathing exercise, counting to 10 or just going for a walk in a different part of the room.

Links2Care educators are carefully chosen and specially trained to ensure quality childcare. We recognize the importance of continuous learning opportunities for our staff. To support the value, we place on the importance of continual learning, Links2Care provides internal and external learning opportunities throughout the year. During monthly staff meeting with the teachers and supervisor we review the *How Does Learning Happen Document* and reflect on our program to ensure we are continuing to grow and reflect on the children and their interests while in our program. The educators are aware of supports in the community and events that are taking place and communicate and encourage families to attend and participate. When possible, the teachers will have community helpers come into the program and help educate the children in the community around them.

We strongly believe that childcare is a shared responsibility between parents and educators. Links2Care staff work together with parents to support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff. Links2Care places a high value on parent engagement. We provide the following opportunities to ensure that communication and information sharing takes place between parents and educators: emails, communication board, daily open communication, satisfaction surveys and newsletters.

Links2Care School-Age Program aspires every day to provide a safe, nurturing and responsive environment that supports the growth and development of the whole child. Links2Care supports and follows the *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* as a professional learning resource guide for educators to support pedagogy and curriculum development in our School-Age Program. For more information on *How Does Learning Happen?* Please visit the Ministry of Education website at <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf>

Curriculum

Links2Care School-Age Program offers a play-based curriculum that facilitates fun and stimulating play experiences based around the children's interests. Our School-Age Program offers safe, supervised environments filled with a variety of age-appropriate activities that promote development and self-esteem in school-age children.

Our School-Age Program include:

- ♦ Creative and Craft Activities
- ♦ Board Games and Puzzles
- ♦ Outside Play
- ♦ Blocks and Dramatic Play
- ♦ Healthy Snacks
- ♦ Science and Math Activities
- ♦ Homework Area
- ♦ Quiet Reading Area
- ♦ Group Activities and Games
- ♦ Gross Motor Activities

Policy Agreements

Links2Care School-Age Program has a number of policies that help us to provide a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment. Many of these documents are required by the Ministry of Education for licensing requirements.

Parents registering a child/children are required to read, sign and date the policy statements included in this package, thereby acknowledging that they understand the policies and agree to abide by them. Please ensure that you read each one thoroughly and that you fully understand it before signing.

Days and Hours of Operation

Our School-Age sites are open Monday to Friday, from September to June on every day the schools are open. These same hours/days of attendance are available to all children. If the school is closed, then our program is also closed.

Hours of Operation: Park Public 7:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. and 3:35 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Hours of Operation: Joseph Gibbons 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 3:25 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Parents will be billed for ALL statutory holidays. The Statutory Holidays observed by the Centre are:

- ♦ New Year's Day
- ♦ Family Day
- ♦ Good Friday
- ♦ Easter Monday
- ♦ Victoria Day
- ♦ Labour Day
- ♦ Thanksgiving Day
- ♦ Christmas Day
- ♦ Boxing Day

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather, Links2Care School-Age Program will close if the Halton District School Board closes the schools. If the school buses are not operating, the program will remain open. Please listen to the local news station to see if the Halton District School Board is closed due to inclement weather. Even if the schools are open, Links2Care reserves the right to close the School-Age Program in the event of severe weather or other safety concerns.

Wait List

Parents who wish to enroll their child in the Links2Care School-Age Program must complete the registration package and submit it to the Links2Care School Age Supervisor. Once the package has been received by the Supervisor, he/she will confirm with you (by email or telephone) if there is availability in the program for your child/children.

If there is no space available in the program for the requested time slots, the child is automatically placed on the waitlist for that program.

Links2Care School-Age Program does not charge any fees for registration on a waitlist.

Space in a Links2Care program is offered to waitlisted parents in accordance with priority. Children are placed numerically on the waitlist based on the date and time that the registration is received by Links2Care. Children currently enrolled in a Links2Care program will have priority, and will move to the top of the waitlist, over a child who is not currently registered in a Links2Care program. When a space in a program becomes available, parents will be notified via telephone or email.

Parents may inquire with respect to their waitlist status at any time by contacting the Links2Care School-Age Program Supervisor. Links2Care will disclose the child's position on the waitlist to parents who have requested information about their status.

Admission

Prior to your child/children starting at Links2Care School-Age Program, parents may request a meeting time to answer questions and complete registration forms. After the Registration Package is completed and processed, the parent will be notified of their child(rens) start date.

Discharge

Written notice of withdrawal must be given TWO (2) WEEKS IN ADVANCE. If you choose to withdraw your child prior to the two-week notice period, you will be billed for the full two weeks. A permanent space cannot be guaranteed if you wish to temporarily withdraw your child.

In the event that the School-Age Program is unable to meet the needs of the child or family, TWO (2) WEEKS NOTICE will be provided for the family to make alternate arrangements. If the

Policies and Procedures are not followed or fees are not paid, Links2Care School-Age Program may terminate service WITHOUT NOTICE.

Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care System

Links2Care has chosen to **opt-in** to the child care affordability program, widely referred to as the Canada-Wide Early Learning Child Care System (CWELCC) which will impact families with JK/SK aged children only (under 6 years).

For those families needing financial assistance with fees, the fee subsidy model will continue to be available through the Region of Halton. O. Reg 138/15 from the Child Care Early Years Act (CCEYA) sets out an income test formula that municipalities must use to calculate the amount of subsidy that can be provided for a family, as well as the amount of money that a family must contribute to the cost of child care (the parent contribution).

Base Fee Schedule*

Base Fee Schedule for Children under 6

as per Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC)

Eligibility Criteria:

Funding under the CWELCC System is intended to support children under the age of 6 (0–5-year-olds), with some exceptions for children with birthdays early in the year who are 6 years of age but are still enrolled in kindergarten. Eligible children for whom fees must be reduced are defined under O. Reg. 137/15:

- ***Any child until the last day of the month in which the child turns 6 years old (irrespective of the type of licensed child care program in which they are enrolled); and***
- ***Up until June 30 in a calendar year, any child who***
 - o ***Turns six years old between January 1 and June 30 in that calendar year; and***
 - o ***Is enrolled in a licensed infant, toddler, preschool, or kindergarten group, a licensed family age group, or home child care (all eligible children receiving home child care at a premises overseen by an agency are eligible for the fee reduction – both agency placed and privately placed).***

Program	Fee
Full-Day Kindergarten – Before School Care	\$12.00
Full-Day Kindergarten – After School Care	\$12.00
Full-Day Kindergarten – Before and After School Care	\$12.04
PD Days (Full-Day Kindergarten)	\$18.22

****Given the continued rollout of CWELCC, in January 2024, fees may be lowered. Information will be forwarded to parents as details become available.***

Base Fee Schedule for Children 6 and older

(Unchanged from 2022 base fees)

Program	Fee
School-Age – Before School Care	\$14.15
School-Age – After School Care	\$14.37
School-Age – Before and After School Care	\$22.39
PD Days (Full-Day School-Age)	\$38.56

*2022 Fee Schedule as approved by Halton Region Children's Services

Payment of Fees

Fees are payable in advance. Upon registration, parents will indicate the days that they are requiring care. Fees can be paid either through direct deposit or by post-dated cheques. For parents who are wishing to provide post-dated cheques, parents can calculate out their monthly fee by taking their daily rate and multiplying it by the number of days of care they are registered in for that particular month. If post-dated cheques are not provided, then Links2Care will automatically prepare an invoice based on the registered days and distribute it to parents at their School-Age site. **The invoice must be paid by the 3rd business day of the month or service will be suspended.**

Part-time children pay for predetermined days and those days cannot be changed within the same week. In circumstances where children attending the program on a part-time basis may require additional days of care, the parent must speak to the Supervisor to confirm space availability. The parent will receive a separate invoice for the additional days of care.

Links2Care offers flexible schedules for those parents who work shifts. Parents working flexible schedules are required to submit their predetermined schedule to the Supervisor prior to the month requiring care. **If changes are made to the schedule, two weeks' notice needs to be given to the Supervisor.** Predetermined billing will be based on the minimum days of enrolment and a separate invoice will be distributed for the additional days.

If there are any questions around billing, they can be directed to **Donna Barun at 905-873-6502 ext. 181 or dbarun@links2care.ca.**

Parents are not able to substitute days that they have registered for. Parents will be billed for ALL statutory holidays. There are deductions from your payment for sick days specifically related to Covid-19. However, deductions cannot be made for vacation time or any other reason not related to Covid-19.

We can accept payment by personal cheque, debit or cash. We **do not** currently accept e-transfers. Personal cheques may be mailed to Links2Care, 2030 Bristol Circle, Suite 202, Oakville, ON L6H 0H2, or cheques may be given to staff on site. Debit payments can be completed at 8 James St., Georgetown during regular office hours. We request that cash payments be dropped off only to Links2Care Program Supervisor located at 8 James Street in Georgetown.

Income tax receipts will be issued every February for the previous year. Please ensure that we have your current address on file.

Late & NSF Fees

After 6:00 p.m. a late fee will be applied, which is payable to the teacher(s) on duty on the day of the lateness. The late fee is calculated at \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 p.m. and should be paid in cash on the day of the lateness. If an emergency prevents you from picking up your child by 6:00 p.m. please call the School-Age site with an alternate plan.

There is a \$7 charge for any cheque returned NSF (non-sufficient funds).

Contact Phone Numbers

Links2Care Office: 905-873-6502 **Office Hours 8:30 – 4:00**

Supervisor's cell 905-702-4192

Park Gym Cell: 905-703-4191

Park JK/SK Cell: 289-218-6203

Joseph Gibbons Gym Cell: 905-703-4190

Joseph Gibbons JK/SK Cell: 289-218-7910

Arrival and Departure Procedures

At this point, as we were in the pandemic, we are still asking that you stay outside when you drop your child/children off, given that the door may be locked. If the door is not open, we ask that you call or text to let us know you have arrived.

Your child/children must be personally escorted to and from the building entrance or program space (gym/classroom) by the parent/legal guardian. Staff will sign your child/children in when they arrive and out when they leave for the day.

Links2Care educators are not able to release any child into the custody of any person who has not been pre-authorized by the child's parent or legal guardian. For safety reasons, we ask that the person to whom we are releasing the child be at least 16 years of age.

The authority to release a child to someone other than the parent or legal guardian is normally provided to us at the time the child is registered in the program. Approval to have someone else pick up a child is accepted only if it is provided to us in advance and is authorized verbally or in writing by the parent or the legal guardian.

Please note that the person picking up the child will also be asked to produce a Photo ID when he or she comes to pick up the child.

We reserve the right to not release a child to any person who, in the sole opinion of our staff, is impaired or otherwise unable to suitably and safely care for the child.

For safety reasons, if your child will not be attending program on their scheduled day, we ask that you call the program to let them know. (See numbers above)

Emergency Management

Links2Care School-Age Program has emergency management policies and procedure that all staff, students and volunteers review prior to starting in the program. In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the premises, children will be escorted to a nearby

emergency evacuation location. This place of shelter will provide a safe place for the children while awaiting pick up. In the event of an evacuation, parents will be contacted by phone and arrangements must be made to have the child picked up immediately. Please ensure that Links2Care has your updated contact information at all times. In the event of an emergency that does not require an evacuation (e.g. lockdown, hold and secure, etc.) parents will be notified of the situation by phone and/or email as soon as it is safe to do so. If you have any questions regarding Links2Care emergency management policies and procedures, please speak to the Supervisor of your program.

Serious Occurrences

The safety and well-being of your child in our licensed facility is our highest priority at Links2Care. We work diligently to provide a safe, creative and nurturing environment for each child. In spite of all the best practices, serious occurrences can sometimes take place.

The Ontario government has a policy that requires licensed childcare centres to post information about serious occurrences that happen at the centre. To support increased transparency and access to information, a "Serious Occurrence Notification Form" must be posted at the centre in a visible place for 10 days.

A serious occurrence could include life-threatening injury/illness, fire or other disaster on site. This will give parents information about the incident and outline follow-up actions taken and the outcomes, while respecting the privacy of the individuals involved.

Emergency Medical Care

If your child is seriously injured or becomes ill suddenly, a Links2Care educator will, in this order:

1. Provide any first aid if required.
2. Attempt to contact the parents or legal guardians using telephone numbers you have provided, and which are on file on site.
3. Attempt to contact the designated emergency contact using the telephone numbers you have provided, and which are on file in the Centre.
4. Seek emergency medical treatment from a physician or a hospital.
5. If the accident is of serious nature, we reserve the right to call an ambulance to transport your child to the hospital at your expense. (Note: this expense may be covered by your insurance plan.)

Please make sure to sign and date the section of the attached form giving us permission to provide emergency medical care to your child(ren).

Illness

Control of the spread of illnesses is of great importance to Links2Care School-Age Program. Please contact Links2Care when your child is ill or when they, or any other member of the family contracts another type of communicable disease.

Please keep your child at home for a minimum of 24 hours if your child is displaying any of these symptoms:

- temperature of 101 degrees or higher
- diarrhea
- pink eye
- communicable diseases
- vomiting
- head lice

Please note: We will not accept any children with any of the above noted symptoms.

In the event your child becomes ill at the Centre, a Links2Care educators will contact the parent or emergency contact and request that your child be taken home. All parents are asked to make arrangements ahead of time to have alternate caregivers available in case your child gets sick.

Administration of Medications

Links2Care School-Age Program will administer both prescription and non-prescription medications to children in accordance with Provincial legislation. The law requires that parents provide the following:

1. Written authorization, including the dosage and times any medication is to be given.
2. The medication must be in the original container, clearly labeled, with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the date of purchase and expiration date, instruction for storage and administration of the medication.
3. Prescriptions must have a current date and have the child's name, dosage, and the expiry date on it or they **will not** be administered.

A Medication Administration Authorization Form must be completed including a schedule that sets out the times the medication is to be administered and the dosage to be given at each time. This form, together with the medication, should be given to your RECE Staff. **If this form is not complete, the medication cannot be administered.** All medication must be given to the RECE teacher and it will be kept in a locked box in the cupboard or the refrigerator. Only the RECE (or designate) is permitted to administer any medication.

Behaviour Guidance

Specific guidelines are set out for the children and are consistently followed by educators. We believe that children learn respect by being given respect and as such, our behavior guidance policies reflect these beliefs. Strategies that educators utilize include setting appropriate limits and expectations, promoting positive behaviour, natural and logical consequences, redirection, and physical environment considerations.

To assist the children and parents/guardian dealing with inappropriate behaviour, the following steps may be taken by Links2Care educators.

1. A meeting with the parents/guardian to discuss the behaviour and strategies to change the current behaviour.
2. Refer parents to Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK) or another community agency that can provide support to the child, parent/guardian and teacher.
3. Parents/guardian may be contacted to pick up the child during times that their child is going to harm themselves or others.

If all attempts to correct the behaviour are unsuccessful, Links2Care School-Age Program may ask the parent/guardian to withdraw the child.

Prohibited Practices:

- A. Corporal punishment of a child (which may include but not limited to, hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching).
- B. Physical restraint of children, including but not limited to confining to a car seat etc.
- C. Locking the exits of the childcare center for the purpose of confining the child or confining the area or room without any adult supervision unless such confinement occurs during an emergency.
- D. Use of harsh, degrading, measures or threats or derogatory language directed at or used in the presences of a child that would humiliate, scare, or frighten the child or undermine their self-respect, dignity or self-worth.
- E. Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- F. Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Food Restrictions & Anaphylaxis Awareness

Links2Care School-Age Program is a **“PEANUT FREE & NUT FREE zone**. Parents are not to bring any food that contains nuts or traces of nuts to the Program. This is to protect the children and adults who have an allergy to nuts as this can be a life-threatening allergy. The children or adults will be carrying an Epi-Pen for their life-threatening allergy. Signs and notices are posted on the parent board and where snack is prepared so all teachers/students and volunteers are aware of the allergies. If your child has an Anaphylaxis allergy, please inform the supervisor to ensure you complete a separate parent package for the anaphylaxis allergy. The paperwork will then be reviewed with parent, supervisor and all teachers. This information will be shared with everyone that works with the child, so everyone is aware off the anaphylaxis allergy.

During the pandemic, we were not permitted to serve home-made snacks due to the risk of spreading Covid-19. However, **as of March 2022** all snacks provided by the childcare program do not have to be prepackaged and so we expect to return to serving home-made snacks. Recent childcare licensing changes (March 8, 2021) does permit snacks be brought from home as long as it is pre-packaged and **does not contain any peanuts or other tree nuts**.

Volunteers & Students in our Program

We welcome students and volunteers into our JK/SK/School-Age program here at Links2Care. We are thankful to all that support our children and teachers from within the community when taking the time to participate and join our program. Please be aware that students and volunteers that are in our program will be supervised at all times by a Links2Care staff member and will not be included in our teacher ratios or left with children at any time.

Parent Issues and Concerns in our Program

Our goal at Links2Care School-Age Program is to support, communicate and build positive relationships with parents/guardians, children and all educators. In the event that conflict that may occur the concern will be address in a respectful, professional and timely manner. The procedures below are steps that will be taken to ensure a positive outcome that will benefit the child, educator and families that are involved. All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible. Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain

the confidentiality of all parties involved. Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial, and respectful to parties involved.

Procedures:

1. If a parent/guardian communicates an issue/concern to a Links2Care employee in person, via email or telephone the Links2Care Program Supervisor will respond to that parent/guardian within one business day. If the Links2Care Program Supervisor is not available staff are instructed to provide the contact information to the Manager, Community Services.
2. Links2Care Program Supervisor or Manager, Community Services investigate the issue/concern and will try to resolve the issue/concern through an initial discussion with the parent/guardian.
3. If it appears a resolution cannot be resolved informally a meeting will be scheduled with the parent and Links2Care Program Supervisor and/or the Manager, Community Services to increase an understanding of the concern or issue that has taken place. The goal of this meeting is to learn and understand how a parent/guardian is feeling, what their expectations are from the meeting and what is best for the child. Following the meeting the Links2Care Program Supervisor and/or the Manager, Community Services will complete a Links2Care Complaint Form and forward it to the CEO.
4. During the meeting, a goal/focus will be agreed upon if appropriate by the parent/guardian and Links2Care Program Supervisor/Manager, Community Services. The goal/focus will include specific and measurable outcomes. Strategies and tools will also be defined. i.e. emails, communication book etc.
5. The parent and Links2Care Program Supervisor and/or the Manager, Community Services will determine appropriate timelines and follow-up to ensure accountability for resolving issues/concerns.

Consent for Supervised Walks and Field Trips

As part of the Links2Care School-Age Program, the children may leave the school site to go on walks in the neighborhood or to local parks. During these outings, the children are continuously supervised by educators.

Consent to Videotape and/or Photograph

Links2Care educators may take photographs and/or videotapes of children while in attendance at the program to support the process of learning and to show their work.

Photos or videotapes may be used for educational and /or childcare-related purposes, for classroom bulletin boards, photo albums, and for newspaper ads and displays regarding our programs. To ensure confidentiality, if names are necessary, only the child's first name will be used. If you would prefer **not** to have your child photographed or videotaped, please inform a Links2Care educator.

Clothing and Possessions

Please send your child with appropriate clothing for the weather and season. Footwear is required and to be worn at all times for safety reasons at Links2Care. Please send extra masks as well.

Links2Care is requesting that all cell phones, tablets, electronic devices, and toys be left at home as Links2Care will not be responsible for lost, stolen or damaged possessions brought into the program.

Smoke Free Environment

We are pleased to offer you, your child(ren) and our staff a completely smoke-free environment. Smoking is not permitted at any time by any person on the school grounds. Your co-operation in helping us provide this smoke free environment is greatly appreciated.

P.I.P.E.D.A. (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act)

At Links2Care School-Age Program, we ensure that the personal information you provide is protected and kept confidential. We collect information about the children for the purpose of providing childcare services. This information includes family information, as well as medical and other necessary personal information of the children for whom we provide care. By signing our Policy Agreement, you consent to providing your personal information for the purposes outlined above. Privacy Officer: Director of People and Culture