

Applegrove Nature School

Parent/Caregiver Participation Policy & “Step Back, Tune In” (for parented programs only)

Parented programs are designed to give children opportunities to explore, play, take manageable risks, solve problems, and develop confidence and independence while their caregivers are nearby and available to support them when needed.

We ask caregivers to practice a **“step back, tune in”** approach. This means staying connected and attentive to your child while giving them space to participate in the play and work through experiences independently.

Caregivers are responsible for their own child’s basic needs, including snacks, water, toileting, clothing and any other personal care they require. Caregivers should remain close enough to support their child when needed, but we ask that they find a spot at the edge of the play area — for example, a low tree spot where they can sit or crouch — rather than staying in the middle of the play space or hovering over their child.

We ask caregivers to allow children to lead their own play. Please avoid directing children's play, solving problems for them before they have had an opportunity to try, or stepping in immediately when children disagree or have a conflict.

Conflict and disagreement are a normal part of being with other people. Learning how to communicate, negotiate, express feelings, set boundaries, listen to others and work through disagreements are important social skills. Supporting children through these experiences is an important part of our role at Applegrove Nature School.

If children need support with a conflict, educators will step in as appropriate and help them work through the situation. We will consider the children's ages, abilities, the circumstances and the level of risk involved when deciding how much support is needed. Caregivers should not discipline, correct or intervene with another person's child. Similarly, caregivers are asked not to give parenting advice or instructions to other caregivers unless solicited. If you have a concern about something that is happening during the program, please bring it directly to the educator rather than addressing another child, caregiver or family yourself.

There will be times when an educator may offer a caregiver a suggestion, provide guidance about a child's behaviour or share resources about child development, conflict resolution or other relevant topics. Our intention is to support both children and caregivers and to help create a welcoming environment for everyone.

The goal of this approach is not for caregivers to be uninvolved. It is to give children the space to experience the benefits of being part of a group while knowing that their caregiver is nearby, paying attention and available when genuinely needed.