

Gradual Entry at Highlands Early Learning Centre



A Gentle Start for a Happy Transition

Starting preschool is a big milestone—for children and parents! Our **gradual entry process** helps children settle into their new environment with confidence, security, and joy.

What to Expect

1. Warm Welcome

Children are gently introduced to their classroom, teachers, and new friends. Teachers clearly and kindly explain routines and expectations.

2. Shorter Days at First

The first few days feature shorter class times. We gradually extend the schedule as children feel more comfortable.

3. Smaller Initial Groups

Reduced class sizes during gradual entry create a calmer, more supportive atmosphere.

4. Parent Participation

Parents are expected to **stay with their child on the first day (or longer if needed)** until the child is ready to stay on their own and a transition plan is established with the classroom teacher.

One adult per child please—no siblings—to keep the environment focused and calm.

Gradual Entry Schedule

- The **first two weeks of preschool** have a special gradual entry schedule for all classes.
- The **Executive Director sends the schedule to families in mid-August.**
- **Typical timelines:**
 - **2-year-old classes** – Usually take about **two weeks** to reach full class time.
 - **3- and 4-year-old classes** – Often transition to the regular schedule after **about three class sessions.**
- **Add-On Classes** – Children may only attend Add-On classes if they can stay in their morning class **without a guardian present.**

Personalized Support

Every child adapts at their own pace. If your child needs extra time beyond the initial two weeks, our team will work with you to create an **individualized transition plan.**

Helping Your Child Adjust

It's common for young children to experience some separation anxiety. Here's how we can work together:

- **Prepare Together** – Read preschool books or role-play at home to build excitement.
- **Keep Goodbyes Short** – A cheerful, confident goodbye reassures your child they're safe.
- **Talk About Feelings** – Listen and validate your child's emotions.
- **Stick to a Routine** – Consistent drop-off and pick-up times provide stability.
- **Stay in Touch** – Ask teachers for updates on how your child is doing.
- **Encourage Independence** – Let your child help pack their backpack or choose their snack.
- **Be Patient** – Some children settle in quickly, others take more time—both are normal.

Why Gradual Entry Matters

- Builds **trust** between children, families, and teachers.
- Creates a **calm, supportive** classroom atmosphere.
- Encourages **confidence** and a sense of belonging.

Our goal is to make the preschool start **positive, smooth, and joyful** for every child. If you have questions or concerns about gradual entry, please reach out—we're here to support you every step of the way.