



## Daycare for Infants

### SOME BASICS ABOUT OUR PROGRAM:

- Our IT program is for twelve children aged 16 months to 3 years.
- We pride ourselves in providing a high-quality environment that nurtures and supports the developmental, social, and emotional needs of children in our care.
- We operate within a 3.25 children-1 teacher ratio. The minimum ratio prescribed by VIHA is 4-1. Very few, if any, daycare operate lower than a 4-1 ratio for their IT program.
- All of our teachers are ECE certified, with the majority of them also having their Infant/Toddler specialization.

### WHAT AGE SHOULD A CHILD START DAYCARE AT?

Research has shown that the best age for a child to start daycare at is at least 12-months-old. While some children are developmentally ready at 12 months, that does not mean that your child will be ready for daycare at that age. The biggest consideration you need to keep in mind is how your child reacts to being away from you.

Some studies have shown that starting daycare too early creates increased stress levels in infants. Most parents opt to take a 12-month parental leave and have to go back to work. This makes for a tough decision, especially if your child is showing that they are not ready for the transition at 12 months.

Some questions you may ask yourself are:

- 1) Do I need to have my child in care full days?
- 2) Can I take a couple of extra months to help with a gradual transition to a daycare program?
- 3) Does my child have a number of skills needed to thrive in an Infant/Toddler Program?
- 4) What is my child's natural stress level?

Nanaimo Innovation Academy's Infant/Toddler program (IT) minimum age requirement is 16 months. We reserve the right to make exceptions to accept a child under 16 months here and there.

We have noticed that most children at 12 months do not seem ready for the transition to a group child care (especially since the pandemic). We have seen an increase in anxiety in young children, as they have not been able to socialize with other people and children during the past year. Additionally, most still need one on one attention, which we are not fully able to provide and maintain high-quality care for all of the other children.

If your child is younger than 16 months, and we have made an exception, or if your child shows signs of high anxiety around people or social situations, please talk with us on how we can support a gradual transition to the daycare.

## DOES MY CHILD HAVE SOME INDEPENDENCE SKILLS?

As mentioned above, most IT programs at daycares operate within a 4-1 ratio (4 children to 1 teacher). This means that children at daycares are typically not given the 1-1 attention they are used to from moms and dads.

At Nanaimo Innovation Academy we operate with a 3-1 ratio, so that the teachers have a little less on their plate and can attend better to the children's needs. We have to look at the group as a whole and make sure that we can continue to provide high-quality care to all of our children.

Skills that your infant should have before attending our daycare are:

- 1) They can drink out of a bottle or a cup
- 2) They can eat a wide selection of solid foods
- 3) They can be put down on a low bed to sleep
- 4) They have the ability to self-soothe (has something they use to soothe and calm themselves when they're anxious or distressed). Please note, we do not use the "cry it out" method to get babies to nap. By self-soothe we mean that they have an item they use when they are feeling upset—soother, blanket, or stuffy.

## WHAT IS YOUR CHILD'S NATURAL STRESS LEVEL?

Every kid is different, so you are the best judge of your child's stress and demeanor. A child that is typically easy going and calm will have a much easier time adjusting and adapting to childcare. If your child gets anxious easily, they are going to experience much more separation anxiety when away from you. When you're not sure, you should start with half-days to see how they respond and slowly work your way up to full days when they are acclimated.

## BENEFITS OF DAYCARE

When your child is ready, there are many benefits to be gained, both for them and for you.

- Early-age socialization with kids their own age teaches valuable social skills. They will learn how to share, solve problems, and work as a team, which is all invaluable to ensure their success later, in school and life.
- Provides an opportunity to make friends early in life. These bonds could last for years, as the move into the 3-5 program. We are also expanding into offering an elementary school program in the future.
- Being around other children will help them build a stronger immune system. Sure, this means when your child starts daycare, they may get sick a few times but it's actually building up their natural defenses. That means fewer colds and fewer missed school days as they grow up.
- You're going to get some time to yourself or adult interaction which, when you have a young child, we know is hard to come by.

Enrolling your child in daycare can have incredible benefits, but it's important to take all of these things into account. We hope this information helps.

As always, if you have any questions about anything, please feel free to talk with the IT Program Manager, Vanessa. She can be reached at [it@nanaimoinnovation.org](mailto:it@nanaimoinnovation.org)

Thanks!