



## BriarPatch Community Preschool

### **An Early Learning Centre for Preschoolers and Their Families**

*I tried to teach my child with books,  
He gave me only puzzled looks.  
I tried to teach my child with words,  
They passed him by, often unheard.  
"How shall I teach this child?" I cried  
into my hands he put the key...  
"Come he said, play with me!"*

**~ Anonymous**

# Parent Handbook 2019 ~ 2020 School Year

## Program Goals and Objectives

1. To create an atmosphere of trust, security and comfort in which the child can feel motivated, esteemed and appreciated.
2. To promote the uniqueness and individual worth of each child by focusing on competence and capabilities.
3. To provide an enriched and stimulating environment that meets the needs of the whole child, including the cognitive, creative, social, emotional, physical and spiritual self.
4. To provide opportunities for self-expression, investigation and experimentation both independently and collaboratively.
5. To cultivate attitudes, habits and appreciations that will enable the child to explore, question and discover the world, its peoples, and their cultures.
6. To encourage problem solving skills and responsible decision through respectful guidance.
7. To provide an appropriate balance between active and passive activities, as well as between child-initiated and adult-initiated activities.
8. To cultivate an active and engaged learning environment that will continue at home, with parent involvement initiated in the classroom setting.

## Welcome:

Welcome to the BriarPatch Community Preschool for **2019 ~ 2020**. We hope your time here is enjoyable and memorable. As a parent cooperative preschool, we strive to meet the needs of the entire family. Please use this Parent Handbook as a guide to explore this first learning environment and experience with your child.

## Early Days:

The first days in a new preschool are extremely important to children's feelings of security and acceptance, whether they have had previous social experiences or not. When separation is handled well, it will help both you and your child to adjust to this new environment and experiences. We advocate a gradual entry process for all children at the preschool to make this an easy and positive transition for all concerned. Parents are always welcome to stay as needed.

Children who are new to a preschool environment may become very tired over the first few weeks. There is a lot for little ones to learn and new routines. Please be patient with your child as they adjust. Give them lots of time to rest after class and help them stay healthy by eating well. If your child does not adjust after a period of 4 to 6 weeks, please talk with our staff or sooner if you are concerned.

## **Health Policy:**

Preventative health measures are necessary in the preschool setting. If your child is not well, please keep him/her home. We will contact you or your emergency contact if your child becomes ill at preschool. Please let us know if your child contracts, or has been exposed to, a communicable disease.

### **Keep your child at home if he/she shows any of the following signs/symptoms:**

- Fever of 100°F (38.5°C) or higher
- Consecutive bouts of diarrhea, or has vomited within the past 24 hours
- Skin infection, undiagnosed rash, eye infection or signs of infectious disease
- Parasite related conditions (impetigo, scabies, head lice, etc.)
- Acute cold with running nose or eyes, sore throat
- Has been on antibiotics for less than 24 hours

### **Your child may return to preschool when:**

- Fever has remained below 100°F (38.5°C) for 24 hours without medication
- Child has had at least one normal bowel movement
- 24 hours has passed since last bout of vomiting
- Child has been examined by a doctor and has received medical clearance for an infection of parasite related condition
- After being on antibiotics for 24 hours

Staff can refuse a child who is too ill to attend preschool, and may request medical clearance. A child who is not feeling well will not enjoy their day at preschool and possibly infect other children, and our staff. **Please adhere to the guidelines so that everyone remains healthy and active in our preschool.**

In cases of severe injury or illness, we will contact 911, then the parent. If we are unable to reach a parent, we will contact the next listed emergency number. Medical consent forms and medical record forms will be taken to the hospital along with the child. A form will be given to parents in order to provide us with a current list of any medications, allergies, or medical concerns. Please keep us informed of any changes in your child's general health.

## **Class Schedule:**

The BriarPatch Community Preschool will offer classes to any children in our community between the ages of 3 years old up to the end of a child's 6<sup>th</sup> year. As mandated by our license with Alberta Children's Services, we can accept children under the age of 36 months (3 years). This will be at the staff's discretion. Parents will be asked to provide proof of age during the registration process.

Classes will be offered on the following days:

- \* Mondays/Wednesdays
- \* Monday/Wednesdays/Fridays
- \* Tuesdays/Thursdays
- \* Tuesday/Thursday/Fridays

Morning classes will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 11:30 a.m. Afternoon classes will begin at 12:30 p.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. The door to the classroom will remain locked until just a moment prior to the beginning of each class. We ask that parents refrain from bringing children too early as they will not be allowed to enter the classroom until our staff has opened the facility at the scheduled time. At the end of the class, the door will be opened at the closing time. The children will be dressed and ready to leave. We ask that parents respect the staff's time and say a quick goodbye. Any concerns can be addressed by scheduling a time that would be convenient for both the parent and the staff.

If you arrive early, please do **NOT** allow your child to run up and down the hallway, and/or play on the stairs. There are other businesses and organizations in our building and we need to be respectful of disruptive noise to those entities. Safety is also a concern as the space is a good size but once families arrive, it fills quickly. Thank you for ensuring children are safe and quietly waiting for the door to open.

All parents must sign in their child at the beginning of the class and then sign them out at the end of each session. This is to ensure that at all times our staff is aware of who is in the classroom in the event that there is a need to account for all children. Examples would be an outing to the park or a fire drill. These records will be kept on file and presented to Alberta Children's Services as requested.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Policy:**

For safety purposes, children are only released to their parents or individuals on the Emergency Contact Form. If someone other than a parent will be picking up their child, please ensure their name is on the Emergency Contact Form and that they bring a valid photo ID. Children cannot leave the classroom until the parent has signed their child out and have their child in their care.

If anyone other than the child's parent or individuals on the Emergency Contact Form is picking up the child, the child's teacher must be notified beforehand.

1. The person accompanying the child to school must bring them into the classroom, provide I.D. and complete the Daily Sign-In Sheet.
2. The person picking up the child must complete the Daily Sign-Out Sheet.

## **Parking Policy:**

Parents are allowed to park in the general parking lot. However, there are some restrictions and we ask you to follow the signs that are posted. If you choose to park in an area that is clearly marked and receive a ticket, we will **NOT** reimburse you for your choice to break a bylaw.

The areas that are restricted include the following:

- \* Any marked **Disabled Parking Stall** ~ there are 2 located just outside our front window. These are **NOT** parent drop off stalls.
  
- \* Any space in front of the building beside the stairs on either side. The railing is painted red, indicating an **Emergency Zone**. If an emergency were to occur, your parked car in this zone could impede the first responders. This is **NOT** a parent drop off zone.
  
- \* Any areas that are clearly marked "Tenant Parking." Parents are patrons **NOT** tenants. Please respect these spaces that have been designated for the tenants in both buildings. This includes the parking lot to the east of the building, down the steps towards our green space. All of that is Tenant Parking.

If we see you violating the Parking Policy, we will remind you of the restrictions. Please be respectful of the above noted areas and choose your parking spot carefully.

We also ask that you do **NOT** leave other children in your car while dropping off your preschool child. There have been incidents regionally of cars being stolen with children inside. We also had in our first year, a child who was left alone in a running car, while mom dropped off the older sibling. This young child managed to get out of his car seat and put the car in reverse, causing damage to not just mom's car but the car that was parked behind. We understand it can be quicker to leave kids in cars, especially in cold weather. Please don't. Please give yourself time for drop off and pick up to bring all your children in to the building.

## **Late Policy:**

We understand that at times, a parent may experience picking up a child a minute or two late. Please ensure that you give extra time for traffic, weather, road conditions, etc. as our staff is entitled to their full lunch hour and their prep time after school each day. We believe our teachers are entitled to their full breaks and prep time in order to provide the best educational experience for your children. Alberta Children's Services licenses our site to only provide services during the class time hours and this does not extend in to the lunch hour or after

school. Therefore, if late pickups become a recurrent issue we will take the following steps:

1. The staff will give a reminder letter which highlights the late pickup policy.
2. If the behaviour persists after the reminder letter, we will issue a fine for the extra time our staff will need to be caring for a child outside of preschool hours. Families will be invoiced as follows:

\* Up to fifteen minutes late: **\$5.00** per occurrence

\* 16-30 minutes late: **\$20.00** per occurrence

3. If the behaviour persists and/or the fees are not paid, the Executive Director, in consultation with the Board President, will take further action which may include that your child is not able to attend school until the fees are paid and your child is able to be picked up on time.

#### **Snack Policy:**

Each parent is to provide a snack for their own child. We ask that parents model good nutritional habits by following the Canada Food Guide. Please keep snacks in small servings and do not include foods such as popcorn, nuts, hard candy, whole grapes, or food which may cause your child to choke. Due to the increasing occurrence of severe allergies, please ensure snacks do not include nuts or peanut butter. We are a **nut free** as well as a **tuna free** centre. Only water bottles are permitted on site ~ **no** juice boxes. We also request that snacks come in containers that can be sent home to reduce our garbage/recycling content.

#### **Discipline Policy:**

- If necessary for disciplinary reasons, the staff caring for the children will take positive action to help direct a child's behaviour.
- Physical or mental punishment from adults will **not** be tolerated.
- Each child will be respected as an individual. Each incident will be treated as an individual situation.
- Reasonable limits will be set for the children. Limits will be stated kindly but firmly.
- The staff will model acceptable behaviour and help a child regain self-control in difficult situations.
- Children will be encouraged to learn through the consequence of their behaviour.
- Parents will be contacted if behaviors are not manageable in the classroom. A meeting will be held and positive resolutions will be explored.

### **Emergency Contacts Policy:**

Parents **must** provide current contact information (e.g. phone numbers, addresses) where they can be reached in case of an emergency. At least one

alternative contact must be provided in case we cannot get in touch with you. This information must be updated immediately whenever there is a change.

### **Communication Policy:**

We will provide as much information as possible in our monthly newsletter. If we need to send out a change to scheduling or an update, we will only send out emails to all families. Please check your messages frequently, especially when the weather becomes cold and we may have to reschedule an outing or cancel a class. We will use the phone only as a last resort. Emails give us a record that shows that families did receive messages. Our Facebook page is for sharing pictures in a secure manner but **NOT** to be used for questions from parents.

Questions that are asked on the "**BriarPatch Kids at Play**" Facebook page will be automatically deleted. We want the purpose of this page to remain as designed ~ a place to share visually the activities and growth in the classroom. Please always refer back to your newsletter and if you are not able to find the answer to the question you have, an email to the Executive Director is just fine. Our staff is busy teaching between 9 and 3, and therefore cannot answer emailed questions during class. Please respect their personal time as well. Emails late at night or on the weekend are not acceptable nor appreciated. If there is an emergency, concern or anticipated absence, the **first** contact should always be the Executive Director who will inform the staff of any issues/absences they may need to know.

### **Cancellation Policy:**

The BriarPatch Community Preschool generally follows the lead of the local Elk Island regional school boards and will cancel preschool classes if weather and/or road conditions pose a safety risk to staff and families. In the event of an extreme cold weather event that cancels school buses, but does not pose a road safety risk to private vehicles, BriarPatch may choose to remain open.

Management also reserves the right to cancel classes in the unlikely event that appropriate substitutes cannot be arranged to cover any unforeseen, or sudden illness, injury, or emergency amongst the teaching staff.

Any such decision regarding class cancellation for any reason will be communicated via email to all parents and guardians as soon as it is made.

### **Parent Helper Policy:**

As a Parent Cooperative, our classroom depends on the valuable gift of parent helpers. Parent helping is a wonderful time to spend in your child's classroom. Expectation is a time in the classroom every 6 to 8 weeks over the course of the

school year. Duties will include helping with art projects, playing with children, sharing a gift or talent, helping to wash hands, sweeping the floor after snack and washing down the tables and chairs. As a technology free classroom, we ask that all parent helpers **shut off** their electronic devices during their time in the classroom so that your child and the other children, parents and staff are able to interact with you. If there is a chance you will need to be reached in case of an emergency, placing your phone on a silent vibrate would be a great option to turning it off completely. Thank you for keeping our classroom tech free!

#### **Siblings in the Classroom Policy:**

We have designed our classroom to welcome siblings. However, siblings are **NOT** included in our ratios and our staff is **NOT** able to be responsible for them during their time with us. Please ensure you are watching your little ones while they are in the classroom. Please do **NOT** allow them to wander through our cozy carpet circle time and disrupt the valuable teaching time. If siblings are too difficult to handle, we will limit their attendance.

#### **Fee Policy:**

Class fees are due on the first of each month. We do accept full payment (cheque only) for the year or half year or broken in to 3 or 4 increments. Forms for Direct Debit for monthly fees must be completed prior to the first day of classes. If your form is **NOT** submitted, your child **CANNOT** attend until it is. **NO** exceptions.

#### **NSF Payments:**

A \$25.00 charge will be applied to cover administrative costs in the event of any payment being returned NSF.

Thank you for choosing the BriarPatch Community Preschool. We look forward to being part of your child's early learning years and hope the memories that are made during this special time are just as precious to you.

~ **Respectfully, Cheryl, Meghan and Chynna**