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Dear Parents,

We welcome you and your child to Little Sprout Preschool. This handbook will outline some of our philosophies, policies and procedures and other important information about the preschool.

If at any time during the preschool year you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call us. We will arrange an appropriate time to meet with you. Similarly, we will contact you if we have any concerns or if we need more information about your child to help us meet their individual needs.

We encourage you to share with us important information that may be useful to us in working with your child. Young children's behavior often reflects any changes in the home environment: it can be useful for us to know when you may have any interruptions in your regular home routine. Example: Grandma is staying at your home for a visit, or parent returning to work. All information is confidential.

It is important for you to read this Handbook and to return all Registration Forms, Health History Form and Emergency Cards to the teacher before your child's first session. **YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND** unless all the above forms are returned to the teacher.

If you have any questions regarding this handbook or forms, please call us at 604-257-8346. We are usually available Monday to Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. If we are not available, please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Donna Williams and Annie Addison

Preschool Supervisors

PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

At Little Sprout Preschool, we believe in providing a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment which accommodates the individual needs of the child while maintaining the needs of the group as a whole. Our program is designed to provide activities that foster growth in all areas of development: social, physical, emotional, intellectual and creative.

We are a multicultural centre that respects a variety of traditions, lifestyles, languages and cultural heritages. We welcome any information you would like to share with us regarding your heritage.

We believe that children learn through play. Play is primarily a **process** and not a **product**. Often work has some values of play, but in work there is usually a predetermined product sought or a goal involved. For example: a clean floor or sewing a dress. But play, is not an end of an activity or the result of an experience. It is the activity itself and the experience itself.

Play is self-initiated. Each episode of play is unique as it is determined by each child's personality. Play is a child's way of building relationships with their environment and with each other.. They are learning to learn. They will discover how to cope with tasks, master skills, gain confidence in their own decisions and most important, they will be having fun!

We set the stage by providing the equipment, materials, and giving time and thought to their selection. We structure the environment, but we do not structure the process of the play itself. Play is the natural and fun way for a child to learn.

Young children learn through 'concrete' first-hand experiences. They are active learners- they learn by doing. They absorb information through their senses: seeing hearing, touching, smelling and tasting.

The preschool provides children the freedom to explore materials and relationships. We will do our best to make your child's time here a positive and rewarding experience.

ART PHILOSOPHY

Creative Art Center

This is one of the busiest areas of the preschool. It is not just paint, but it is collage, scissors, glue, crayons, chalk, 'beautiful junk', building, tearing, feeling and fun. Particularly in this area we do not think in such terms as **mess, waste and mistakes.**

The arts and crafts are a part of the program in which young children have the chance to work with many kinds of materials and use many techniques to make an original creation.

The art center gives the child a time and place to put together thoughts, ideas, feelings, actions and abilities into the activity. The **goal** in arts and crafts is not how the product looks, but the **process** of making it. It is in the process that the child expresses feelings. The expression of feelings is what is important here, not what the object looks like.

Success in arts and crafts helps the children feel confident about themselves and their activities.

*****It is important to remember that although we invite every child to have a turn in the art center your child may have chosen to play with blocks, the playdough or other areas and may not have something to take home. If your child has made something in the Art Center there will be times that the art will be kept at school for display and sent home at a later date. It may be helpful to explain to your child that sometimes their art can come home with them and sometimes it will stay at school and they can take it home another day*****

Children's art will be displayed in the preschool throughout the year.

Remember that your child's creativity means **originality**. We encourage parents to refrain from comparing their child's creations to other children's in the class.

HELPFUL HINTS:

Try not to ask your child, "What is that?" when they show you their picture or creation (it may be that all you see are lines and scribbles, when, in your child's eyes, it might be an **obviously** magnificent lion!) instead, ask your child "Tell me about your picture/creation!" You may find your child talking more confidently about what he/she has done.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

We believe that children learn best through experiences. We believe that the teachers must lovingly guide and redirect the children to help them learn to co-operate with their peers and to have positive experiences to encourage and enhance their growth and development while in our care. We believe that we can best accomplish this by:

- 1) Having a variety of activities for the children.
- 2) By the use of group management techniques, limiting the number of children in some areas of the room, for example: 4 children at a time in the house corner. This avoids overcrowding and allows for sufficient materials and the opportunity for constructive interactions.
- 3) By ensuring we have the licensing required ratio of 2 qualified ECE instructors per class of 20 children.
- 4) By speaking to the child if their behavior is inappropriate for the area or material they are using, i.e. "the sand stays inside the table".
- 5) By using positive language with the children to give praise for appropriate behavior, i.e. "I like the way John is sitting down: we say "I need you to walk" instead of "Don't run."
- 6) After using the above techniques, if a child is having difficulty co-operating in an area of the room, the child is redirected to another activity.
- 7) After using these methods, if a child continues to display inappropriate behaviors and/or continues disruption of the program, the teacher will have an informal conference with the parent at dismissal time, to inform the parent and to enlist their assistance in working with the child.
- 8) Children with consistent difficulties are taken through the above procedures, and the parents are counseled regularly. Ultimately, the child could be dismissed from the program. This is seriously considered when the safety, welfare and learning of any child is affected and/or the needs of the group are not being met.
- 9) Please be advised that under the law any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh/ humiliating or frightening treatment is illegal and against our philosophy. NONE of these behaviors will take place at our preschool. This policy also applies to parents/caregivers while in the preschool or attending any preschool functions.
- 10) On a final note, we try to be as consistent as possible with our rules so that the children will know what is expected of them. We find that this helps the children feel safe and will lead to them feeling secure and confident in the preschool setting.

DAILY PROGRAM

At the beginning of the school year, we establish a routine for each class. This routine helps the children feel secure and gives them some feeling of the passage of time.

A regular session of preschool consists of 4 basic parts: free play, circle time, snack time and outdoor play. During free play time, each child may choose to paint, do puzzles, play at the water table, look at books, build with blocks, use manipulative toys, pretend in the dramatic center, or visit the art center. At circle time, all the children and teachers sit in the circle area. Stories may be read from a book or told by the teacher through the use of flannel board or puppets. It may also be a time for songs, fingerplays, basic musical instruments and body movement. For snack time, each child brings one piece of fruit or vegetable. Each session concludes with an outside play time followed by a short goodbye circle time. The preschool door is then opened by one of the teachers and the parents form a line as each child is called from the circle to go home.

TYPICAL DAY AT PRESCHOOL:

This is a general outline of our daily routine. It will occasionally change for special events, field trips:

Arrival/ Free play (block corner area closed for this time)*Please arrive on time for your child's class everyday. This is a very important time as the children will be introduced to the activities they will take part in at the Hello Circle*

Hello Circle/Free play

Clean up / Book time

Circle time

* Washroom / wash hands (the children may use the washroom/toilets at anytime during their class)

Snack time

Outside play

Goodbye Circle

Dismissal *Please arrive 5 minutes prior to the end time of your child's class. This is also very important as your child will expect you to be there with all of the other parents when the door is opened.

ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE

It is **very** important for you to accompany your child into the classroom and ensure they have come through the wooden gate from the preschool hallway when you arrive.

The reasons for this are:

-The teachers have no way of knowing that the child has entered the classroom, therefore they are unsupervised and may go back outside.

-Please make visual contact with the teacher so she knows your child has arrived in the room.

Pick-Up Time:

To ensure a safe departure from the preschool, the parents need to line up on the right hand side of the preschool entrance hallway. The teacher will then call your child to leave the circle when their parent is at the **front** of the line. Please wait for your turn to pick up your child and refrain from calling them from the circle area if you are not in the front of the line. This will make pick up time safer for all the children.

-If someone else is dropping off or picking up your child, they must follow the same procedures.

Please check the parent board for any messages or notices.

It is the parent's responsibility to check the newsletter or notice board regularly.

If someone else is picking up your child, inform the teacher and write it on the notice sheet posted by the kitchen door. IDENTIFICATION is required, if the teacher has not previously met the person picking up. It is very important for your child's safety and welfare that we aware if any changes that might occur. A brief note or telephone call to inform us of a "special" pick up is necessary. We will not release your child to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so. (This also includes another parent from your child's class)

****PUNCTUALITY** is very important. Please drop off and pick up your child on time.**

It is necessary for you to arrive at the preschool 5 minutes before dismissal time in order for you to be there when the door opens.

We understand that occasionally you are delayed beyond your control. We suggest that you have another parent from your child's class(that you have given authorization to on your registration form) pick up your child and wait for you in the lobby or vice versa. This would enable us to attend to our other commitments.

If you are frequent late parent, you will be required to fill out a late pick up sheet/form or you will be asked to withdraw.

HEALTH/COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:

Do not bring a sick child to preschool. It is unfair to the child and it exposes others to unnecessary germs. Any child with a bad cold, cough or fever, should not be at preschool. If your child has a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting you must allow 24 hours before attending preschool.

***Often children may ask to come to school even though they are ill. Although your child may be disappointed, please keep your child at home.

If your child is coughing/has a runny nose or does not seem to be feeling well upon arrival or during the session, the teacher may ask you to take your child home.

If a child displays any of the following symptoms, they must be kept home or they will be sent home.*Temperature of 100 or above *Diarrhea *Vomiting *Skin Rash of unknown origin *Continuous cough or pain *Conjunctivitis (pink eye) until at least 24 hours after medication is started and eyes are no longer crusting or oozing. *Green stuffy or runny nose.

Outside play is an important part of our program. We play outside rain or shine. If your child is not well enough to play outside, please keep your child at home.

Report any infectious illnesses to the teacher immediately. Some common childhood illnesses are chicken pox and pink eye. Do not bring a child or sibling with Rubella (red measles) to preschool.

Immunizations should be kept up to date. Our Health Nurse will visit the preschool during the year to look over your child's health history form provided by the Health Department.

Allergies/ Food Allergies and Restrictions

If your child has any allergies, food allergies or food restrictions (ie. no ham etc.) please write them on your child's registration papers.

If your child has asthma, we will require a note from your doctor. If your child has severe asthma or anaphylaxis, special medical forms will need to be filled out.

SICKNESS AT PRESCHOOL/ACCIDENTS:

If your child becomes ill at preschool, or is injured, the teacher will contact the parent at home or work. If we are not able to reach you, the teacher will contact the emergency contact person that you have provided on the emergency consent card or registration form. Parents or the emergency contact person will be expected to pick up your sick or hurt child as soon as possible.

As stated on the emergency card, it is our policy to notify a parent when a child is ill or needs medical attention. If emergency medical attention is required, staff qualified in first aid will attend to the needs of the child. Staff will contact the ambulance. Staff will contact family and/or emergency contacts. Occasionally, we cannot contact parents and we need to take appropriate action on behalf of your child. We will take the signed consent form with us to the emergency center. The consent authorizes the person in charge (teacher) to call a physician, or summon an ambulance for emergency medical aid.

Be sure to keep the information on your child's files up to date. Inform the teacher of any changes or additions.

FIRE DRILL/EARTHQUAKE DRILL/EVACUATION PROCESS:

Our fire/earthquake drills will be practiced monthly once the teachers feel the children are ready.(usually starts in mid October) These will take place during our regular preschool sessions. We will keep our drills low-key and as "fun" as possible for the children.

If an emergency or disaster situation does occur during your child's class time and the building is deemed safe your child will be cared for at the preschool until they are picked up.

If an emergency or disaster situation does occur during you child's class time and the building is deemed unsafe our alternate pick up location will be next door at King George High School.

Your child will be released only to the persons you have identified on the emergency consent card/ registration forms you have provided (or to other authorized personnel i.e. emergency response team)

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PEOPLE:

The Public Health Nurse visits the preschool regularly. The Nurse supplies us with current information on Health Care. The Health Department provides us with pamphlets which are usually posted in the preschool entrance. Referrals may be made by the nurse, after consultation with parents, to obtain other services of the Health Department: speech therapist, audiologist, etc...

Other members of the Health Team may also visit the preschool occasionally.

The Health Nurse has access to the information on your health history form as this form is provided by the Health Department.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS:

During the school year, there may be times when one of the teachers may need to be away. The preschool will hire a qualified substitute teacher. As stated by licensing, the preschool cannot operate if there is not a licensed teacher present or qualified substitute teacher available.

BEGINNING SCHOOL:

Entering preschool offers important new experiences to the child. It means leaving their familiar home and depending on adults other than their parents. It means finding a place for themselves in a group of other children about their own age. There are new toys, different toilet arrangements, and a new play area. S/he meets a variety of responses from the other children, and must trust the teachers to understand them and keep them safe in these new situations.

The child's feeling of confidence in themselves will be strengthened if s/he can make these adaptations successfully. For many children, attending school can confirm their sense of trust already fostered in the home and neighborhood.

Here are a series of steps that are taken to help a child enter preschool. Attending school for a short period of time with the parent may be all that can be managed as a first step for the child. It should be emphasized that no young child should ever be left at preschool without any preparation. S/he should have someone staying with the child (only if needed) on their first day, and the first day should never be a long one. Taking small steps at the beginning of the year to enter your child gradually into preschool saves time in the end because the child is less likely to feel overtired and stressed.

STEPS FOR GRADUAL INTAKE:

Open House – The children and their parent/caregiver visit the school when it is not in session to become acquainted with the physical setup and to establish a relationship with the teacher. For the returning children, it is an opportunity to reacquaint themselves with the room and to say hello to the teachers.

First Day – The children attend preschool for a limited, specified time. We encourage parents to say good-bye and leave if the child is ready to venture off on their own. On this day half of the class attends for one hour.

Second Day – Your child attends with the whole class for a longer period of time. Your child will meet all the classmates for the first time.

Third Day- Your child attends with the whole class for the regular session time. However, for some children, it may be necessary to prolong the gradual intake schedule if they are experiencing separation anxieties. At this time, the teacher will discuss the procedure with you.

We believe that a gradual intake into the preschool will help your child to adjust happily.

SEPARATION:

Children who have difficulty separating from their parents:

First of all...relax! Annie and Donna have been helping children (and their parents!) to enter into preschool for the first time for the past 18 years at Little Sprout Preschool. We understand that this is a special and sometimes emotional time for both your child and you. We will do our best to make this a successful experience for everyone. Your child is very aware of your emotions so the more relaxed and “happy” **you are** the more confident **your child** will feel in this new situation.

We encourage parents of the child who is experiencing difficulty separating to spend 5 or 10 relaxed minutes when dropping off their child. The parent will be asked to sit down in one place so that s/he is visible to the child, and should not move out of the child’s sight for any reason. If the child knows where to find you s/he may venture a little farther away. The teacher will decide on the right time for the parent to leave. The parent will tell the child that s/he will come back and is close by. Then the parent should leave **immediately and completely without lingering**. Rushing in or lingering can add to the anxiety of separation.

You will be asked to wait in the center **close by the preschool** in case your child may need you. We will ask you to stay with us for a short time until we feel your child is ready to venture off on their own. The sooner the separation takes place the easier it will be for the child. We will follow the first step of gradual entry (1 hour time frame) until your child is able to stay on his/her own. If you have any other children, please make other arrangements for them if possible. We have found that it is an easier transition if you can devote your total attention to your preschooler. It is a special time for you and your child.

If you have any concerns regarding the separation process, please feel free to share them with the teachers.

**Occasionally a child may not be emotionally/physically ready to separate from a parent and to enter into preschool. If your child is having extreme separation anxieties for a long period of time, or is not able to separate at all for a period of time, you will be asked to enroll your child at a later date. We always try to keep in mind what is best for your child. We want preschool to be a fun experience.

CLOTHING:

Young children learn best by using their senses in first hand experiences. Please have your child dress in **play clothes**. They may find it difficult to relax and participate in the program if they are concerned with “keeping clean”.

A step toward independence and good self-esteem is when children can do things for themselves. Your child should be able to use the washroom, without worrying about belts, hard to undo buttons, suspenders and overalls. Also at this age, shoelaces are difficult to master. Velcro shoes or slip on shoes are great. They can put them on and take them off all on their own!

Wintertime: **Mittens Only!!** No gloves, please. It is easier for the children to put on their own mittens.

Outside play is a daily part of our program (rain or shine). Dress your child appropriately for the weather. If your child wears boots to preschool, your child will need to change into inside shoe (rubber soles). For safety reasons, all children must wear something on their feet. No bare feet or sock feet.

ALL CLOTHING, BOOTS, SHOES, MITTENS, HATS,ETC. MUST BE LABELLED WITH THE CHILD’S NAME.

There is a “Lost and Found” box. This is where we will put any items that do not belong to the preschool.

*** Please do **not** bring any toys from home to the preschool***

SNACKS:

Each child will need to bring **one small piece of fruit or vegetable** that has been prepared (cut/peeled) and placed in an easy to open container that the child can manage on their own. Whole dried fruits are acceptable. You will also need to send a drink: a small juice (natural/unsweetened), milk, or water. Please send the snack in a bag with your child’s name on it. **(Please do not send any other food items other than fruit or vegetables)**

BIRTHDAYS:

On your child’s birthday or the preschool day nearest to your child’s birthday, your child will receive a birthday crown and we will sing Happy Birthday. On that day, the preschool will provide cookies for your child and classmates. We want to keep this event low-key.

KIDS AT PLAY – PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEO TAPE

During the school year, we will occasionally photograph children while playing and use the pictures for the preschool photo album and for display on our bulletin boards. Please note that during special events such as parties, field trips etc....parents may be taking photos or video tapes of the children. Great memories!!

SPECIAL SOCIAL POTLUCK EVENTS

During the year, we will have three special social potluck events: one for Halloween, one before the Christmas Break and one for the Easter holiday. At this time, we will put up a sign up sheet for parents to sign. Your child must be accompanied by a parent or other adult. This is a great time for the child and their parent to do fun activities together. This is also a wonderful opportunity to meet your child's friends and socialize with their parents. Please inform the teacher if you are having difficulty finding an adult to accompany your child.

FIELD TRIPS

Every day most children drink milk. Adults tell children that milk comes from cows and can show them a picture of a cow. However it is a much richer experience to actually see the cow being milked. First hand experiences are a way for young children to learn. We will plan several trips through the year which we feel will be fun and enriching experiences for everyone.

An information form will be sent home prior to a field trip. Information about the trip will be on the top portion of the form. Please return the bottom section and keep the top portion for reference.

If you do not wish your child to participate, you will need to keep your child at home on the field trip day and return the bottom section stating your child will not participate.

On most of our field trips we travel by a reserved bus. Seating is limited, therefore we ask that all slips be returned by deadline date. In order to help us cover costs there may be a small charge for the children and adults to ride the bus.

Admission costs may apply to some of our field trips. Parents may be expected to pay for their own admission and the preschool will pay for the children's admission costs.

All field trips are carefully planned. Each child must be accompanied by an adult. Ratio: 1 adult to 2 children.

Field trips are planned for registered preschool children only (including siblings). You will need to make arrangements for other children in your care. If space permits, extra adults and children in your care may be able to attend.

WALKING TRIPS:

From time to time, as part of our program, the children participate in walking trips near the preschool. ** No advance notice will be given for these walks**

Please be aware that during the school year:

- 1) There will be a few days when special events are held. On those days, the class time will be reduced to one hour and no regular session will be held.
- 2) There will be a few days when out trips are held. No regular classes will be held on those days. The teacher will inform you of the schedule.
- 3) On special event days and field trip days, preschoolers are requested to have an adult with them. If a parent, caregiver, family member or friend cannot attend with your child, please ask one of the preschooler's schoolmate parent/caregiver if they can supervise your child during the event. If not, please inform the preschool teachers and they will try to help you come up with alternatives.

SCHOOL CLOSURES:

The preschool will be closed on all statutory holidays. We will also be closed during Christmas Break and Spring Break (in conjunction with public schools).

Snowy Weather: The preschool will be closed if the public schools are closed and the preschool will be closed if the teachers are not able to get to school and home safely.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS:

In order to attend preschool, your child must be at least 3 years of age by December 31, 2009. (Birth certificate is required or medical card with birth date on it).

Your child must be fully toilet trained before starting preschool. No pull up diapers at preschool. We understand that occasionally your child may forget to use the toilet and soil their undergarments. If this occurs, we will contact you. Because this is an uncomfortable situation for your child, we ask that you pick up your child immediately. If we are unable to contact you, we will phone the contact person on your registration papers.

However, if forgetting to use the toilet occurs frequently, you may be asked to withdraw your child and try again at a later date.

ENROLMENT FOR THE NEXT PRESCHOOL YEAR:

First registration will take place for families who have a child currently enrolled in Little Sprout Preschool or have previously had a child in this preschool.

Second registration will take place for families with children registered in the “Two’s Time Program” in the West End Community Center.

Third Registration will then be open to the public.

The first registration for returning preschool students will take place on the last Thursday in April.

The second registration for “Two’s Time Program” students will take place on the first Thursday in May.

The third registration for the public will take place on the first Friday in May.

These dates (or any changes to the dates) will be advertised in the Spring. Registration is on a first come, first choice basis.

Please note: You must be present on registration day to enroll. One registration per adult, unless there is also a sibling to be registered.

FEES:

All payments are kept and processed by the front office staff.

Registration fee is due at the time of registration and is non-refundable.

W.E.C.C.A. Membership is required for registration.

You will need to pay for your child’s fees by postdated cheques made payable to W.E.C.C.A. Cheques are dated for the first of every month (first and last month’s fees are required upon registration). You may also pay by Visa or MasterCard.

** All of the above is required at time of registration.

Subsidies may be available to cover all or some of your monthly fees for those who have financial need. Please ask the teacher for an application form. Applications for subsidy must be made directly to the Ministry of Social Services office near you, not through the West End Community Center.

WITHDRAWAL:

One month’s notice is required for withdrawal. Notice must be given to the teacher prior to the **1st day of the last month that your child is attending school**; otherwise your last month’s payment will be taken in lieu. Remaining cheques will be returned to you upon request.

We hope that we have provided you with some helpful information in our parent handbook. Please feel free to ask the teachers Donna and Annie if you have any questions that you may still have regarding your child at Little Sprout Preschool. Our number at preschool is 604-257-8346. Our email addresses are as follows: Donna (donna.williams@vancouver.ca)
Annie (annie.addison@vancouver.ca)

