

The Little Red Schoolhouse Society

Early Learning Program Handbook For Families



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Mission Statement:

The Little Red Schoolhouse Society is a registered charity, operating as a non-profit society, which organizes preschool and community programs for children and families living on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia.

The programs are offered at the Little Red Schoolhouse, a heritage building nestled on the edge of Ruckle Provincial Park. We provide a warm and welcoming environment for children to play, explore, learn and grow in cooperation with others. We care about the well-being of each child and do our best to nurture all aspects of their development through play-based and experiential learning. We encourage children to be themselves and experience the wonder of childhood, while spending lots of time outdoors enjoying nature.

About The Little Red Schoolhouse:

The Little Red Schoolhouse is a heritage building located in the South End of Salt Spring Island. Pioneer Sam Beddis and family built it in 1885. It sits on the forty acres of land donated by civic-minded settlers, Theodore Trage and Henry Spikerman. Trage's daughter Bertha later became one of the school's first teachers, though back then it was called Beaver Point School.

When the school opened in 1886 twenty-four students were enrolled from the community of settlers. They were from the ages of three to sixteen and largely of First Nations, Hawaiian, and European descent. Some even came by boat from other nearby islands to attend. Eventually this donated land, including Beaver Point Hall, formed Beaver Point Park adjacent to Ruckle Provincial Park.

Over the years Little Red has served the community by providing a place for a variety of educational programs. It became a preschool in the 1970's and is now the oldest continuously running one room schoolhouse in British Columbia.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

“The early years – from birth to age 8 – set the foundation for lifelong learning. Offering our children a wide range of quality experiences in the early years can help children become their best – physically, socially, intellectually and emotionally.” BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, Early Learning Framework

Pre-school Program Policy:

- Educators will prepare a program that meets or exceeds the learning principles and key areas of learning for children up to five years old as outlined in the British Columbia [Early Learning Framework](#).
- Educators recognize their responsibility to promote ethical and best practices to guide and educate the children and families with whom they work, as outlined in the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia [Code of Ethics](#).
- Educators and parents understand that the program is offered indoors and outdoors. Therefore children are expected to arrive prepared with the proper outdoor wear and footwear for these environments and weather conditions.
- Educators and parents agree to dress appropriately themselves, modeling positive attitude and behaviour to children in all weather conditions.

Withdrawing & Refunds Policy:

- The program manager must be advised in writing 30 days prior to a child being withdrawn from the program. Refunds are not generally given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from attending the program. The Little Red Schoolhouse Society reserves the right to determine and assess these circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- A full refund will be given in the event that a program is cancelled due to insufficient registration.
- Any person who leaves during the middle of a program due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason will not be refunded any portion of the program fees.

COMMUNICATION

General Communication

Little Red educators will communicate with parents/emergency contacts via telephone or email. Please be sure to communicate the following:

- If your child will be late/absent
- If your child is ill with a communicable disease
- If your child is being treated for lice

Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency at Little Red, one of our educators will contact parents/emergency contact by telephone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

Privacy Policy

The Little Red Schoolhouse Society takes the privacy of the children and families seriously, and we have taken steps to protect it. Any personal data shared with us, including photographic images, will be processed strictly in accordance with privacy legislation and will be used for the purposes that you have consented to. We will not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so.

Illness Policy

In the following cases, we ask that children stay home from preschool for at least 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided:

- Temperature over 101 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools)

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at preschool, the affected children will be asked to return home.

Participants affected by communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, etc., are asked to stay home from preschool until their health care provider (i.e. doctor, nurse, naturopath, etc.) has communicated that it is safe for them to attend.

FOOD POLICIES

Garbage-Less Lunches

We encourage you and your child to pack a waste-free lunch, e.g. pack food in re-usable containers to minimize garbage and wrapping materials. At the same time, we ask that parents/caregivers consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which their child's foods are packed. We seek to empower even our youngest participants to carry their own snacks and water bottles on our outdoor adventures, which is manageable with small containers. We provide cups, plates, bowls and cutlery for indoor snack/lunch time, if needed.

Hand washing and Drinking Water

Children will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water before eating and after using the bathroom. They will also be able to refill their water bottles on site.

Food and Drink Policy

Educators at Little Red are aware of the importance of a partnership with parents to ensure children establish healthy eating habits.

Food

Parents are responsible for providing a healthy large snack. In the event of a "rushed" morning, parents are welcome to bring their child's breakfast.

Inappropriate Foods

- Foods listed as an allergy or sensitivity
- Gum or Candy
- Chips, cookies, and pop

Drinks

Please refrain from packing juice boxes. Water will be accessible to the children at all times. The children will be offered and encouraged to drink water during and after snacks/ lunch and after physical activity.

Environment and time for snack and lunch

- We will sit together as a group for all meal and snacks; however, children are welcome to eat any time they are hungry.
- We will strive for calm and pleasant meals focusing on the social interaction between children, their peers and the adults.
- Educators will sit with the children when eating and assist the children's with all aspects of eating as necessary.

- Children will not be encouraged to share or trade snacks from their personal lunches, as this ensures the health, safety, and happiness of the community.
- On occasion, educators will provide the children with a group snack or incorporate cooking into our program. Allergies, food sensitivities and therapeutic diets will be respected.

Food Allergies/Sensitivities/Special Diets

Please advise educators if your child has a food allergy, sensitivity, or special diet. The centre will post the child's name and a list of relevant food allergies and/or sensitivities.

If a child suffers severe reactions or anaphylaxis to a particular food, then that particular food will be added to the inappropriate foods list for the duration of child's enrolment at the Centre.

If a parent suspects that their child has an allergy or food sensitivity, the child should be seen by a medical practitioner who can refer the child to a specialist. Any diet formulated for a child will be made available to educators.

Special Occasions

Parents are welcome to bring treats for birthday or other special occasions. Parents will be given a list of food allergies and/or sensitivities.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES & FIRST AID

Little Red has written emergency procedures with which all educators and volunteers are familiar. A copy of the procedures is at the school and will be shared with all families at the beginning of the school year or upon their enrolment.

Two emergency/first aid packs are located at each door of the preschool. In addition to first aid supplies, there are photos and emergency contact / information for each child enrolled in our program.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of our preschool program, and indeed of healthy child development. Our educators endeavour to co-assess and co-manage risk with each other and with the children. We believe this to be an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. Our educators conduct seasonal site risk assessments, as well as activity risk assessments and individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis, always considering the balance between risks and benefits when doing so.

Some of the risks inherent to outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools such as carving knives
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire
- Contracting poison ivy
- The presence of wild animals and ticks
- Inclement weather

INCLEMENT WEATHER & CLOSURE POLICY

In the event that the weather/road conditions make travel to/from Little Red unsafe for either educators or families and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will notify parents by telephone at least one hour prior to the time the program would have started. In the event that the weather makes it necessary for Little Red to close earlier than normal, this decision will be communicated to parents so that they are able to make the necessary arrangements for early pick up.

Extreme Weather Policy

Educators at Little Red consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making (i.e. how far to venture away from the schoolhouse, how long to be outside).

In the case of predicted rainstorm, thunder and lightning, or high-winds, educators and children will stay in Little Red.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We recognize the importance that family plays in the development of the child's identity and self-confidence, as the primary caregivers for their children. While we are not a parent-participation program, we do encourage every parent to visit for a session while their child is in attendance. If this is something you'd like to do, please give advance notice to ensure that another parent will not be visiting on that day.

DROP OFF & PICK UP

Drop off Supervision Routines

Parents Will:

- Sign children into the centre on sign-in sheet, including time of arrival
- Hand children over to an educator and ensure an educator is informed when they are departing

- Ensure that their 'Permission to Release' a child information is up to date.
- Inform educators of any current or pending court orders affecting the child

Educators will:

- At this point, educators will take full responsibility for the child at the centre

Saying Goodbye

It can be difficult for both parent and child to say goodbye as your child transitions to preschool for the first time. To make drop-offs easier and less stressful for both of you, we encourage short and sweet goodbyes, rather than lengthy transitions.

By showing your child that you believe this is a safe and wonderful place for them to be away from you, your confidence will help them find their own. In difficult goodbyes, the anxiety is often highest leading up to the parent departing (the peak point of stress). Once the parent has departed, the anxiety can then calm, and we can begin to build the trusting relationships that will lay the foundation for positive early learning experiences.

Pick Up Routines:

Parents will:

- Take responsibility for their child when arrive on site
- Sign child out of centre, including time of pick up
- Ensure supervision of their child in the parking areas

CHILD ENTRY & RELEASE POLICY

Parents must give Little Red written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e. a relative who picks up child, emergency contact in cases where parents cannot be reached). If written authorization is not possible, the parent must phone us to give verbal authorization. Parents must notify staff before changing the usual pick-up routine. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.

Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure:

If someone other than a parent/authorized alternate pick-up person arrives to pick up a child and we haven't been notified in advance by the authorized parent or pick up person we will:

1. Call parent for verbal authorization.
2. If parent cannot be located, the child is not allowed to leave Little Red until a parent has been contacted.
3. Little Red educators will remain with the child until an authorized pick-up person arrives.

CUSTODY & ACCESS TO CHILDREN

According to the law, both parents of a child have equal access to a child and to the information about the child's development, health and welfare. The only time an educator can deny access of a parent to a child is when there is a written separation agreement or a legal court order. Little Red requires a copy of this document.

Release of Children to a Person Who Appears Intoxicated/Impaired:

Educators will not release a child to a person who appears intoxicated or impaired. In such cases, educators will assist in making other pick-up arrangements (i.e., a spouse or other authorized person). Educators are legally responsible to protect the children in their care from any perceived risk.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Our Early Childhood Care and Education Philosophy

Our preschool programs are facilitated by provincially certified Early Childhood Educators who provide quality care and education for children ages 2.5 to 5 years old. The Little Red Schoolhouse program is inspired by the following early years frameworks and philosophies, which our educators integrate into their planning and teaching practice:

BC Early Learning Framework: The planning of play-based activities and experiences at Little Red are guided by the four inter-related areas of early learning outlined in the BC Early Learning Framework: *Well-being and Belonging*, *Exploration and Creativity*, *Languages and Literacies*, and *Social Responsibility and Diversity*. These areas of early learning help ECEs to nurture and develop children’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capacities.

Forest & Nature Schools: Forest and Nature School programs support children’s connection to Nature through regular and repeated access to natural spaces. The educator’s role is to provide experiences that weave play-based, place-based, child-directed, emergent, and inquiry-based learning. By providing children with time and space to develop their interests, skills, and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences, they deepen their relationships with their community and the natural world.

North American Reggio Emilia Alliance: Reggio Emilia is a holistic approach that emphasises children as active citizens who are capable of contributing to their learning. The relationships between a child and other children, teachers, family, preschool, and community are all connected. Therefore, each child is encouraged to explore and make meaning of these relationships through multiple “languages” – e.g., verbal expression, art, music, and play.

Preschool Program Schedule:

Please note that the daily schedule is flexible. Children and educators will be planning additional activities, such as field trips to the beach or Ruckle farm, inviting special guest presenters (e.g. musicians, artists, etc.), baking or yoga at Beaver Point Hall, and more! If you have ideas for activities, please share them with our educators.

Care and Supervision Policy

Our educators believe that active supervision is an important skill when caring for and educating children. It includes a combination of listening to, and watching, children play, being aware of the environment and its potential risks, the time of day, managing small and large groups of children and understanding child development.

It is equally important that educators be aware of the individuality of all children in the program: the different ages, personalities, behaviours and their characteristics. Our educators build relationships with children to learn about who they are, how they react, communication skills, play with one another and to discover their individual personalities. These are vital to develop as they assist educators to predict children's play patterns which affect how they establish and plan environments and coordinate supervision strategies to maximize children's safe and ability to play free from harm or injury.

Principles of Active Supervision

Setting up the environment: We are consciously set up the environment (placement of equipment and toys) for success

Positioning of educators at our Centre: Our educators are aware of the importance of where they place themselves for supervision especially for more high-risk activities. Supervision at our centre will be active and interactive with the children (not just standing and watching)

Scanning the environment: Although our educators are actively engaged in an activity with a child or group of children they are consistently scanning the room or outdoor play area.

Listening when children are playing: We listen for sounds of that alert us they the play may cause potential risk i.e. crying, offensive or aggressive language or silence.

Knowledge of the children in Care and understanding of how groups of children interact and play: We try to anticipate play behaviour based on our knowledge of the children. We actively engage the children

Transitioning groups of children: We are aware of potential risks during transitions (leaving or entering the building). We plan routines and games to make transitions for the children smooth and safe.

Promoting Play and Learning Experiences: The best supervision is active engagement with educational materials, equipment and educators, that promote thinking, creativity and discovery.

- Children are never left unattended while eating or drinking
- Children are always in sight and/or hearing of educators at all times
- Educators are aware of the number of children in the centre at all times (regular headcount) especially when leaving or re-entering the building.
- Educators will communicate with each other if they leave the area
- All educators are aware of the Centre's "Safe Release a child" policy and only release a child to an authorized person

- Child to educator ratios will meet or exceed licensing standards
- Be aware of where every child is at all times
- Question any strangers entering our centre or play area.

Guiding Children's Behaviour and Social Emotional Development

At Little Red we manage behaviour proactively by engaging in developmentally appropriate activities, and by nurturing a positive physical and social/emotional space. In general, our behaviour management will:

- Consider the child's developmental level and needs
- Make expectations clear and provide scaffolding to help students participate positively
- Focus on the behaviour rather than the child
- Be implemented in a positive and consistent manner
- Be designed to help the child to learn appropriate behaviour and techniques
- Involve consulting with parents/guardians/teachers to include their input of successful approaches with a child, as well as to keep them informed of issues as they arise
- Help children to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision making skills, the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively in their interactions with others

To promote positive behaviour, our educators will use many different strategies for prevention and intervention, including the following:

Prevention:

- Establish clear, consistent, and simple limits.
- Offer straightforward explanations for limits.
- Use positive, rather than negative, language.
- Focus on the behaviour, not the child.
- When there is a choice, make a clear statement of what is expected.
- Allow time for the child to respond to expectations.
- Reinforce appropriate behaviours with words and gestures.
- Scan and circulate the learning environment to foresee problems.
- Plan appropriate activities for the age group, and vary the program with quality equipment and materials.
- Ignore minor incidents.

Intervention:

- Gain the child's attention by eye contact and use a calm voice.
- Remind child of limits.
- Acknowledge feelings before setting limits.

- Distract or divert attention when appropriate.
- Demonstrate problem-solving skills.
- Offer simple choices.
- Use logical and natural consequences.
- Redirect.
- Limit the use of equipment/materials.
- In extreme cases, discuss with the parent the available options for evaluation by a professional, in order to receive extra support for the child's unique needs.

For additional information on guiding children's behaviour, our educators recommend the booklet, [Guiding Children's Behaviour](#), published by BC Ministry of Health. This resource promotes strategies and techniques that reinforce requirements in the [Community Care Facility Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation](#). The booklet provides an overview of the attitudes, knowledge and skills helpful to parents, caregivers, and professionals in their day-to-day relationships with children.

Staff – Children Ratios

The ratios between educators and children adhere to, and exceed, provincial licensing regulations.

Staff Responsibilities

The responsibilities of our educators/volunteers are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring the physical safety of children, by co-assessing and co-managing risk with them on an ongoing basis such that all participants feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world
- Considering the social and emotional safety of children, and endeavouring to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur
- Modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of the materials, tools, and supplies at preschool
- Playing with and closely observing children - the trajectory of their play, the evolution of their interests, their questions and struggles - in order to support teachers in using their experience at preschool as a "launching pad" into a deep, lively, and meaningful exploration of the Early Years Framework and curriculum

PREPARING FOR PRESCHOOL: Outerwear and Supplies Checklist List

Depending on the season, children will need rain-suits, boots, extra warm clothing, extra hats and mitts, rubber boots, hiking shoes/sneakers, wool, socks, thermal wear, etc. For cold weather, please consider the following factors when dressing for preschool:

- 1) Insulation: Natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as does fleece. Polyester pyjamas are another good option. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate it with a breathable layer.
- 2) Middle Layer: This is another insulation layer that creates 'dead-air space' between skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.
- 3) Outer Shell: This layer should be waterproof and wind-proof, as well as breathable.

Winter/Heavy Rain Season:

- Hats
- Rain gear (e.g. Muddy Buddy or waterproof boots, pants, jacket)
- One set of warm, waterproof boots
- Three base layers: thermal shirt and pants, middle layer, wool/fleece sweater [cotton is not recommended for cold/rainy weather conditions]

All Seasons:

- Small child-size backpack
- Lunch and snacks
- Water bottle
- Extra changes of clothes [underwear, socks, pants, shirts] kept at the school.

A note to parents/caregivers:

It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child warm. Thrift stores or online swap groups are great options. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) in Victoria has excellent children's outdoor wear for all seasons.

Little Red also has rain gear for children to use during the program.

LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE SOCIETY BOARD POSITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The board at Little Red is formed every year by the parents who have a child or children enrolled in our program. It provides many individuals an opportunity to share skills or to develop them when they volunteer to be a member of our board.

The board meets three times per year, organizing fundraising, playground clean up parties, social events for the families involved in the school, and to stay informed about the program events through the reports provided by the program manager / early childhood educator.

The Little Red Schoolhouse Society bases its actions on the following beliefs:

1. Children have a right to be respected as unique individuals. They are entitled to environments and opportunities that foster emotional, social, cognitive and physical development.
1. Families have the right to be involved in a meaningful way in their child's preschool experience and deserve assurance of quality care programs for their child while they are involved in work, education, other commitments and personal fulfillment. Little Red has an "Open Door" policy for families.
1. Teachers are entitled to a working environment that recognizes and respects their training, skills and commitment to children and support to families. This is demonstrated through respectful communication and personnel policies.
1. Preschool programs enhance the lives of children, their families, and the community by providing a caring, supportive and a vital community service.

The board positions to fill are: President, Secretary, Treasurer, Maintenance, and one Member at Large. Additional Members at Large are welcome! The majority of administrative responsibilities, related to the running of our preschool program are performed by the ECE/Program Coordinator/Administrator. The duties of each are listed in the Staff binder at the school. The board is asked to do the following:

- Attend the AGM in September
- Attend two additional meetings in fall and spring
- Help to organize the Beaver Point Hall Craft Fair
- Help to organize the Spring Playground Clean up
- Keep open communication with the staff and bring any family feedback or concerns to the Program Coordinator (PC)
- Discuss any issues brought to the board by families.
- Discuss and provide feedback to the ECE/Program Coordinator for anything that they may require support for.
- Help with decision making and vote on proposals to the board.
- Maintain certain duties related to their board position.
- Discuss a year end potluck, possible family campout.

There are some activities that board members may choose to be a part of if they have the time, interest, or expertise. This might include a grant application for example. Otherwise, this would fall to the PC and the staff who will always maintain basic administrative requirements, but may not be able to take on additional projects.

Board Positions:

President:

- In coordination with the PC, decide on date and time for meetings.
- Be a signer on the checking account. (This may be the secretary or treasurer instead. Cheques require 2 signors, the other being the PC or administrator).
- On behalf of the society, sign any documents such as charitable receipts, grant applications, and tax return. (May be the secretary or treasurer)
- Help PC to meet licensing requirements when necessary.

Secretary:

- Attend meetings
- Take minutes at the meetings, type up and email to PC/Administrator for filling and print of and post at the school.
- May be asked to sign society documents.

Treasurer:

- Attend Meetings
- At the beginning of every month make the deposit for the fees from families.
- Communicates with the administrator for anything additional.
- May be asked to sign society documents.

Maintenance:

- Attend Meetings
- Maintenance duties will vary from year to year. It is important to have one or two people to fill this position as we are maintaining a heritage building and we are responsible for the surrounding playground and keeping equipment safe. Most outdoor issues are addressed at the spring work party.
- Communicate with the PC to see if there are any small jobs to do throughout the year. The grass maintenance is something that this person could help with, but has been done by a student in the past when the budget allows. Firewood is another area that help may be required.

Member at Large:

- Attend meetings
- Support other board members
- It is good to have an uneven number of members for voting purposes
- More representation for families

Some years larger projects, such as re-roofing the building, need to have the boards involvement. Most of the time the input is minimal with society and licensing requirements being completed by the staff. That being said, the board is always welcome to bring new projects that they are inspired to be involved in. Our focus is always on the children and their early learning experiences at Little Red. Together, we are better!