



Armstrong Preschool
Where Children Learn Through Play

Parent Handbook

Updated February 2024

We acknowledge that our preschool is located on the traditional territory of the Secwépemc and Syilx Okanagan peoples, past and present, and we are grateful to offer play-based learning within the territory for all children. We honour with gratitude the land itself and the Secwépemc and Syilx Peoples.

This handbook will help explain our school, our philosophy, and our operational policies. We reserve the right to update this handbook at any time, and we will let families know if we do. Please take a few minutes to become familiar with the information contained in the pages. On your registration form, you will be asked to acknowledge you have read and agree to the policies outlined in this handbook.

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Our Mission and Philosophy

At Armstrong Preschool, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each child and family we serve. Our center experience is designed to promote each child's individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. As caregivers and educators, our mission is to provide a safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment, which fosters a child's natural instinct to explore, discover, create, and become a lifelong learner.

Armstrong Preschool provides an environment that is a warm, safe, and nurturing place where your child will be encouraged to build, splash, dash, pretend, and create their way to exciting discoveries about the world around them. Our emergent and play-based programming is inclusive. We welcome all children, and honour diverse abilities and learning styles/needs. We encourage families to share in their children's preschool experience and rely on their support and knowledge in the day-to-day running of the preschool.

The Society and Board

Armstrong Preschool has operated as a non-profit parent participation organization since 1976 and continues to do so today. We rely on an elected executive board made up of volunteer parents who work and support each other to ensure the preschool functions successfully. While all parents are members of the society, the Executive Board is the governing agent of our society. Positions are President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Communications, Fundraising, etc. If you are interested in joining our Executive, please contact our board email, general@armstrongpreschool.ca.

The board stays connected by doing the following:

- *Monthly Board Meetings* –are held to discuss plans and make decisions in the running of our school. All parents are members of the society and are encouraged to attend the general meetings. Meetings alternate monthly between Executive only and General Board Meetings. Watch for postings and the website for dates. Those who volunteer to run the school are the Executive Board. If you are interested in becoming an Executive Board member or have questions, please email the Executive Board at general@armstrongpreschool.ca with your name, contact information, and queries.
- *Annual General Meeting* – in May is our most important meeting of the year. This is when the new board is voted for and begins the term of the new executive. A family member is requested to attend.

Parent Participation

Parent participation, whether on the board or not, is key to the operation of the preschool and reduces our fees. Families have the most important role in contributing to a child's wellbeing and learning.

How to Stay Involved

- *Meet the Teacher Night/Open House* – is held prior to the first day of school in September. An opportunity to meet your teachers and get an introduction to the general day to day look of classes. This is a great time to bring your questions! All postdated cheques and/or payment plans are due at this event. Watch your email for your invitation and dates.
- *Share Basket* - Families are encouraged to bring snacks in to share with the classes throughout the week. This may be fruit or veggies, tortilla chips, cheese, pickles, crackers, baked goods, pepperoni etc. It could be something your family enjoys the most! Sharing food and mealtimes encourages social connections and builds bonds. Please ensure that all donated snacks are peanut/nut free. Items listed as “may contain” are acceptable*. Please check with teachers concerning allergies in your class. Homemade goods may be brought in with a full list of ingredients. This also includes special treats for birthdays. *Please be aware this may change year by year depending on class allergies.

- *Monthly Newsletters* - are a major source of communication and information including a calendar of events and fundraisers for the month. Please take the time to read the email or the one posted at the preschool.
- *Online* - Find us online through Facebook, Instagram, and online at armstrongpreschool.ca

Parent Tasks

- *Parent Helper Days* – 2 throughout the year are required and may be fulfilled by a parent, caregiver, or family member. Volunteers may be asked to make snacks, do light cleaning, and/or prep for future activities. We ask helpers to be present for 2.25 hours minimum. Younger siblings/children are not permitted in the school during class time as per licensing. A calendar is posted inside the school, and you may choose any open day. We look forward to seeing you!
- *Fundraising* - Please take part in at least 2 events throughout the year either financially or in person by volunteering. Watch for ongoing and seasonal events posted around the school and online.
- *Daily/Weekly Maintenance* - This may consist of taking laundry or toys home to wash, prep for activities, or doing a task around the school. We request that you complete 2 tasks over the course of the year. Tasks may be posted on the attendance sheet or in our newsletter. Several times a year, we clean the school before closing. Please aim to attend one if you are able. Watch the board for a sign-up list.

Our Staff

The quality of our program is due to the quality of our staff. They are experienced and knowledgeable in the field of early childhood education.

Armstrong Preschool hires educators with the following qualifications:

- Lead Teachers have a certificate or diploma of Early Childhood Education and are licensed through the ECE Registry of BC. They also have current First Aid and FoodSafe training.
- Assistant Teachers have an Early Childhood Education Assistant Certificate or have courses to be a Responsible Adult.
- Support workers have training and skills to assist children and families who need extra support. For more information on services available, please go to nona-cdc.com. The North Okanagan Neurological Assoc. is our main access to services.
- All staff must have a criminal record check and reference inquiry before employment begins.
- All staff participate in Professional Development courses on their own time each year to continue to improve their skills.

Licensing

Our school is licensed and regularly inspected to ensure we meet or exceed standards. Armstrong Preschool is subject to inspection by Interior Health, Armstrong/Spallumcheen Fire Dept, provincial licensing, and city building agencies. Regulations and inspections pertain to staff qualifications, the facility and playground, nutrition, health and safety matters, record-keeping, and child-to-staff ratios. If you have any questions regarding licensing or regulations, please speak with the manager or parent board. You may find licensing regulations at Child Care Licensing Regulation on bclaws.gov.bc.ca.

Curriculum

Our teachers provide your child with a fun, safe and supportive play-based preschool experience. The curriculum is based on the children's interests and needs, naturally occurring themes (seasons/weather/community events) and developmental milestones. Activities change as the children's interests and needs change. Social/emotional/physical development and cognitive concepts are placed throughout the centers and positive interactions with our teachers support each child's learning. Each day will consist of a balance of structured and free time which includes circle-time, group and individual activities, art, music, snack, outdoor time, and field trips throughout the year. We encourage curiosity, creativity, and imagination! There is no access to a computer or screen time while at school, though we may use our phones as a tool if there is a pressing question (What does a whale sound like?) or to take photos.

A balanced program includes active play and physical literacy. Active play gets the heart pumping and makes them “huff and puff.” It is recommended that preschool children participate in 180 minutes of physical activity throughout their day. Our outdoor play time allows for 20 to 40 minutes of active play. Children run, play tag, climb, sled, shovel, bounce, and swing. More time is built into our indoor curriculum: dancing, large block play, movement activities/games like go-go-stop, duck-duck-goose, parachute play, yoga, etc.

Bringing the heart rate back down is important, too. We use calming, cool activities to support children's regulation and mental health.

We have several field trips throughout the year within walking distance and further abroad. These may include: the Pumpkin Patch, Memorial Park, and a farm trip. Where local travel is required, parents/guardians must provide transportation and remain with their child/ren during the trip. Siblings are welcome! Watch communications for more information.

Long-term success is based on the ability to self-regulate, problem solve, take appropriate risks, and a continuing desire to learn. We strive to support your child’s social/emotional development and love of learning first and foremost.

Respect and Confidentiality

- We pledge to respect your family's privacy and will always engage in respectful and confidential dialogue with you and your children. Any concerns or questions you have should be taken to the teacher in a respectful and confidential manner. Feel free to phone and make an appointment or do so in person. There is not always time to chat during drop off and pick up.
- We encourage all to speak positively and respectfully to all. This keeps our school a child-friendly and positive environment for all.
- The manager and staff can be notified at manager@armstrongpreschool.ca and/or 250-546-9314. The volunteer parent board can be reached at general@armstrongpreschool.ca
- To operate professionally and respectfully, we ask that communications about preschool business be directed towards the above. Please refrain from contacting staff privately via social media, text, or approaching them in person outside of school hours unless otherwise arranged.
- **Acknowledging and accepting all people is a fundamental principle that fosters understanding, compassion, and unity. Regardless of our differences, we share a common humanity. Let us celebrate diversity, promote kindness, and build a world where everyone feels valued and respected.**

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Classes begin at 8:30 am or 12 noon. Please sign your child in on the attendance sheet posted by the front door. We encourage the children to say goodbyes at the door but acknowledge that some children will need more parental support to enter at first, working towards drop off at the door.

Please note on the attendance sheet if someone other than the drop off person will be picking up. If we do not recognize the pickup person, we will ask for ID and confirm they are authorized as per your registration form prior to releasing your child. If you need to add someone, please let us know in person or in writing prior to the end of class.

At pickup, please write down the time of pickup and initial the attendance sheet. Enter the school and collect your child's belongings from their hook and cubby. Exit through the red door in the snack room and wait at the front of the school. After cleanup/end of day routines, the children will get a personal goodbye before being released to you. You are welcome to stay to play and socialize after the teacher has said goodbye. Please be aware that your child is now under your supervision, and we ask that you move away from the front of the school to accommodate parents still picking up.

Please pick up your child on time as the school runs on a tight turnaround between classes. Fees may apply if you are late more than twice with or without a phone call. A \$5 per 10 minutes fee may be charged to cover additional care outside of class time.

At 10 minutes late, we will call you and if we cannot reach you, your emergency contact. We know that emergencies happen. If that is the case, please speak with a teacher.

If a parent drops off or arrives to pick up and is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the teacher will offer to call an alternate pickup person for parent and child. If a parent chooses to leave with the child, the RCMP will be called.

Your Child's Day

Please come prepared for all weather conditions with appropriate clothing/sun block/hats, etc. Unless it is unsafe to do so, we will spend time outside. If required, have your child's sunblock on before dropping them off as we are not allowed to apply it without a medication release form.

Tuesday/Thursday Classes 3- and 4-year-old classes

- AM class begins at 8:30. PM class begins at 12:00.
- Children change from outdoor to indoor shoes, wash hands, find their name tag, and play until our welcome circle.
- After circle, both rooms open for exploration and free play until clean-up.
- We meet again on the carpet for stories, songs, and activities. Our music teacher comes every 2 weeks.
- Transition to hand washing and provided snack.
- Get ready for outside play time! We encourage the children to get themselves ready as much as they are able.
- Play outside until end of class.
- At pickup, please ensure your child has a high-five from a teacher and you let us know you are leaving. This is vital as we want to ensure their safety!

Monday/Wednesday/Friday Class 4-year-olds

- The door opens at 8:30, welcome circle starts at 8:40.
- Children change from outdoor to indoor shoes, wash hands, find their name tag, and play until our welcome/show-and-tell circle. The child with show and tell that day is our helper for the day!
- After circle, both rooms open for exploration and free play until clean-up.
- We meet again for the calendar and perhaps a short story/song/activity.
- We share a snack (provided). Then there is another free play with guided and free activities.
- We clean up and meet for games, stories, songs, and fun on the carpet. Our music teacher visits every second week. Children wash and meet for a packed lunch.
- After lunch, the children get ready to play outside for the remainder of the class.
- At pickup, please ensure your child has a high-five from your teacher and you let us know you are leaving. This is vital as we want to ensure their safety!
- Class ends at 12:30 pm. If you are going to be late, please let us know as soon as possible.

Behavior Guidance Philosophy

Our goal at Armstrong Preschool is to guide our students in developing strong social and emotional skills. Guidance is about building an encouraging setting for every child in the group. It means helping young children understand they can learn from their mistakes, and it starts with showing them how. This includes modeling, setting boundaries, and offering choices. Children with strong social-emotional skills tend to be happier and show greater motivation to learn.

Additionally, socially-emotionally healthy children are better able to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers. To support our students in developing these skills, we take a proactive and preventive approach to guidance that reinforces appropriate behaviors rather than focusing on inappropriate behaviors. We follow the guidelines for behaviour provided by Licensing.

- **Our Environment:** We provide children with exciting materials and engage them in activities that are appropriate for their age to keep them focused and attentive. We develop schedules that meet the needs of young children by avoiding long periods of wait time without activity. Yet, our schedule is flexible enough to follow the children's interests as well as their cognitive, physical, and biological needs.

- **Our Teachers:** We work to develop a strong connection with each child by getting to know them and spending time interacting with each child daily. By speaking calmly, we help children put words to their emotions and model appropriate dialogue. We use social stories to help teach our students healthy social skills. We strive to serve the individual needs of each child while ensuring the safety of all the young children in our care.
- **Our Families:** We communicate regularly with families to build a relationship and consistency between home and school. We partner with families to offer support, guidance and can connect them with outside experts (e.g., NONA, Speech and Language etc.) to help give their children the best foundation for success.

Armstrong Preschool does not condone nor tolerate the use of any kind of physical punishment, psychological abuse, coercion, threats, derogatory remarks, withholding, or threatening to withhold food as a form of discipline on our property. As per licensing and best practice, staff or others are prohibited from using physical punishment on the children. Teachers are legally responsible to document and report any witnessed or suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities. The Ministry of Children and Family Development's guidelines for reporting abuse will be used.

Guidance Procedures

When a student presents with challenging behavior, we will do the following:

- Observe the children to identify events, activities, interactions, and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
- Focus on encouraging the child's social, communication, and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.
- Respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the child's safety and the safety of others in the classroom. Our response will be calm, respectful, and give the child information on what is acceptable behavior and what is not.
- We will document the challenging behaviors and the intervention methods that were attempted in a log. Documentation may include incident reports, ABC charts, or Care Plans.
- Teacher-parent discussions regarding a child's behavior shall be held in private. They shall focus on working as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.
- All discipline decisions will be individualized, consistent, and appropriate to each child's understanding and development level.
- If you have any questions, please contact our staff.

Health and Safety

Self-Care Skills

Children are not required to be fully potty trained. Children are encouraged to toilet/dress themselves and follow appropriate hygiene practices throughout the day. We will support your child by encouraging them to use the bathroom and incorporate this into stories and fun.

Every child should have a change of clothes in their backpack. We will help with changing if needed. We frequently remind the children to use the washroom and model appropriate behaviours regarding hand washing and hygiene. If a child requires assistance in the bathroom, a permanent staff member will assist.

Please send weather appropriate clothing. This includes sunhats, jackets, snow pants, gloves, hats, and indoor and outdoor shoes. Inside shoes must be flat, non-slip and non-marking. Outdoor shoes should be non-slip and flat. Shoes must be worn inside.

General School Safety

The front door and gates must remain locked during classes. The fire doors are equipped with alarms. Smoke detectors are hardwired and tested monthly.

Each class has a monthly fire drill. They will be performed with calm, respect and in an age-appropriate manner.

One emergency evacuation drill is practiced per year. We will inform you prior to.

Smoking is prohibited on or around school property. This includes electronic cigarettes, vapes, or cannabis.

Please ask a teacher before taking or posting photos of any child but your own.

Illness Policy

Please keep your child home if they are vomiting, have diarrhea, fever, green/yellow/cloudy mucous (nose or throat), an ear/eye infection, untreated head lice, chicken pox, any sign of a communicable disease or are generally unwell.

If your child has vomited, please keep your child home for 24 hours after the last occurrence. Head lice/pinkeye/staph must be treated before children may return to school. Please wait 24 hours after starting treatments, including antibiotics, before returning to class.

We will alert families if a child in their class has been diagnosed with chicken pox, lice, covid or another communicable disease.

We reserve the right to call you to pick up your child if any of the above is noted at preschool. If we cannot contact you, your emergency contact person will be called.

Please let us know if your child will be absent as soon as possible. You can email manager@armstrongpreschool.ca or call 250-546-9314.

Emergency Procedures

Immediate Emergency Evacuation Site is:

**Armstrong Elementary School - 3010 Pleasant Valley Road –
Phone #250-546-8778.**

**Emergency Relocation - Armstrong Elementary to Hassen Arena.
Parents/Guardians/Emergency contacts will be contacted via
phone.**

Our school is “Nuts/Allergy Aware”. This means we avoid peanuts and tree nuts of any kind. Allergies are taken seriously and will be reviewed each year. All allergy information will be posted in the kitchen. Allergy and medication information must be reported on your registration form. Please distinguish between an anaphylaxis allergy or a sensitivity/preference. If your child requires an Epi-pen, Benadryl, etc at home for an allergy, we will require they have it at preschool as well. A *Medication Release Form* will need to be filled out and signed. Without this, we are prohibited from administering any medication. If sending your child with any medicine, please inform the teacher so it can be stored safely.

It is your responsibility to inform teachers of any legal/custody/allergy/illness information for them to act in the best interests of the child/ren. If there are custody or fostering circumstances, please inform your teachers via registration forms. You will be contacted as soon as possible to discuss your family’s needs. Formal papers may be required in adherence with licensing requirements.

In the event of a staffing issue or unforeseen circumstance, parents will be notified no later than 30 minutes prior to their class start time by phone and/or email. Should the school be closed (unscheduled) for more than 3 consecutive days, monthly fees will be pro-rated and reimbursed.

Enrollment, Waitlist, and Withdrawal Policies

Registration is held in late April (date TBA each year). Children must be 3 or 4 years old by December 31st of the current school year to attend preschool. Current families have priority for the upcoming year’s registration. New registrants are on a first-come first-served basis. If spaces are available, registration is ongoing throughout the year. A minimum of 5 children is required to run a class. Wait lists are available for full classes. Licensing allows up to 20 children per class.

Our school closely follows the School District #83 North Okanagan Shuswap calendar for holidays. We close for Winter and Spring breaks but are open for professional days.

We will try our best to give you your requested class. Some movement may be necessary to meet the needs of your child and the class. Class lists will be finalized as soon as possible.

Fees

(Proposed fees for 2024-2025 school year. Amounts are based on Sept – June registration. May be subject to change)

M/W/F - 3 days per week class	4 hours/day	
	\$278.10 / month	\$ 27.00/day
After CCFRI Grant	\$229.18 / month	\$ 22.25/day

T/Th - 2 days per week classes	2¼ hours	
	\$118.41 / month	\$ 16.00/day
After CCFRI Grant	\$ 83.25 / month	\$ 8.09 /day

- There is a \$25 per year, per family, registration fee (non-refundable). This fee is required to hold your child's space. This is your society fee and makes you a member in good standing. Please note, you do not have to have a child registered to be a member of the society.
- September (or first month) and June fees are due for your child to begin attending and will be refunded if an overpayment has been made.
- Fees are due on the 1st of the month. Please speak with our treasurer at the open house or by e-mail (treasurer@armstrongpreschool.ca) for payment options. September & June fees are due in September. October through May are due monthly. Please notify us at registration if cash will be used.
- A fee reduction of \$5 per additional sibling, per month is available. Your first child's fees are not discounted.
- If your child registers after the 15th of the month, your fee is calculated by the day until the next month.
- Please give at least 1-week written notice to our treasurer if banking information changes to prevent penalties.
- If fees are not paid on time, a warning will be issued. If fees are late a second time, a \$10 charge may be applied. An additional \$5 per day will be charged after the warning until fees are paid or an agreement has been made with the board.
- There is a \$45 charge applied for NSF cheques.
- Families with unpaid fees are not permitted to register for an upcoming year until owing fees are paid in full or an arrangement has been made with the Board.

The Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB) can be applied for at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-funding/child-care-benefit>. Please speak with a teacher for our portion required for your application. Submit these promptly as your fees may be pro-rated.

Withdrawal

Should you need to withdraw your child, a written withdrawal notice must be submitted a minimum of two weeks in advance to prevent penalty. One month is appreciated. **Written notice is required** to adhere to our licensing agreement. Please state the reason (i.e., moving, scheduling conflict, etc) in your letter.

NOTES:

Thank you for taking the time to
learn more about your child's
preschool!

*"Scientists have recently determined that it takes
approximately 400 repetitions to create a new
synapse in the brain—unless it is done with play, in
which case, it takes between 10 to 20 repetitions!"*

Dr. Karyn Purvis