

Parents' Handbook

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	PHILOSOPHY OF STRATHCONA NURSERY SCHOOL. 1	
2.1	Purpose and Objectives.....	1
2.2	Play and Whole Child Development.....	1
2.3	Benefits of Nursery School.....	2
3	OUR PROGRAM AND POLICIES	3
3.1	Hours of Operation	3
3.2	Daily Schedule	3
3.3	Age Requirements.....	4
3.4	Enriched Program	4
3.5	Field Trips.....	4
3.6	Fees	4
3.7	Notice to Cancel.....	4
3.8	Discipline	5
3.9	Late Policy	5
3.10	Snack Policy.....	5
3.11	Health Records and Allergies	6
3.12	Health Policy.....	6
3.13	Emergency Evacuation Plan	6
3.14	Toilet Training	6
3.15	Spare Clothes/Classroom Shoes	6
3.16	Toys.....	6
3.17	School Closures/Cancellations.....	7
3.18	Inclement Weather	7
3.19	Communication with Parents.....	7
4	MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES IN A COOPERATIVE	8
4.1	Duty Parenting	8
4.1.1	Duty Day Expectations	8
4.1.2	Code of Ethics.....	9
4.1.3	Confidentiality	9
4.1.4	Siblings/Newborns and Duty Days.....	9
4.2	Volunteering on a Committee or on the Board.....	9
4.2.1	Board Meetings.....	9
4.2.2	Board/Committees	9
4.3	Fundraising/Casino Participation.....	9
4.4	Cleaning Bees	10
4.5	Attending Semi-Annual General Meetings.....	10

1 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Strathcona Nursery School. We are a not-for-profit parent cooperative preschool established under the Societies Act of Alberta. We are licensed as a preschool with Alberta Social Services and the City of Edmonton.

This parents' handbook outlines the policies and procedures of Strathcona Nursery School and should be read in conjunction with the Policy Manual.

The membership of the Strathcona Nursery School Society consists of the parents of registered children. The elected officers of the Society are the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Registrar. Along with a Co-Secretary, Co-Treasurer, Assistant Registrar, Duty Roster Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, and Fundraising Chair, they make up the Board. Parents not on the Board assume other volunteer positions.

Strathcona Nursery School promotes a "learn through play" environment for 2½ to 5 year olds.

We emphasize play because play enhances the growth and development of the whole child, of his or her physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Through play, children learn to concentrate, exercise their imagination, try out ideas, practice grown-up behaviour, and make sense of their world.

2 PHILOSOPHY OF STRATHCONA NURSERY SCHOOL

2.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of Strathcona Nursery School is to present a high-quality, developmentally appropriate program based on the "learn through play" philosophy. Strathcona Nursery School and its teachers

- Provide an opportunity for your child to play with preschool children in a mixed-age setting
- Encourage co-operation and the development of relationships
- Provide a setting to help children help themselves and to solve problems
- Help build a sense of security and self-confidence
- Offer opportunities to explore and play with a wider range of materials than is available in most homes
- Encourage creativity, curiosity, and spontaneity
- Allow the children to make their own choices and help in building on the children's interests
- Offer a consistent play environment, where children can meet regularly with the same group and have time to develop relationships with one another and to learn about themselves

2.2 Play and Whole Child Development

Through play, the whole child is developed.

Physical needs:

Large muscle development and body co-ordination are developed through the use of climbers, large blocks, balls, riders, sleds, mats, and jumpers. Small muscles and finer co-ordination are developed through small blocks, puzzles, crayons, paints, clay, sand, and musical instruments. Children are taught body care methods and needs through special theme subjects, activities, resource persons, etc.

Emotional needs:

Children are offered a consistent routine and encouragement in an atmosphere of caring, concerned adults who are sensitive to the feelings of children.

Social needs:

A preschool of mixed and similar ages makes companionship possible. Under the guidance of the teachers, the school provides many experiences in sharing, waiting one's turn, and managing relationships.

Intellectual needs:

Learning centers (for instance, the science and pet center; the book corner), cooking, and visits from a paleontologist or a letter carrier all contribute to the growth of ideas and stimulate the curiosity.

We believe that a child's spirit is that unique combination of curiosity and pleasure with which the child seeks to learn. This spirit can be weakened or strengthened depending on outside influences. We hope that our program will assist in fostering a sense of excitement and love of learning.

2.3 Benefits of Nursery School

The child learns to:

- Express thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others
- Manage behaviour in a group setting
- Compromise
- Show empathy
- Co-operate
- Express him or herself through art, music, and play
- Make friendships
- Become more independent and develop self-confidence

Benefits to the parent include:

- The satisfaction of participating in your child's preschool experience, understanding their routines, learning about their play
- Being a part of a strong parent network
- Witnessing your child's love of learning develop
- Ensuring the smooth operation of the school through your involvement

3 OUR PROGRAM AND POLICIES

Strathcona Nursery School is one of the longest-running parent cooperative preschools in Edmonton. Strathcona Nursery School has operated for 30 years. The classes have children aged 2½-5, and children in diapers are welcome. The mixed-age classroom allows children at different ages to learn from each other and can help reduce conflict between children of the same age.

3.1 Hours of Operation

Morning sessions: 9:15-11:45 a.m. Monday through Friday
Afternoon sessions: 1:15-3:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
Enriched program: 1:15-3:45 p.m. Wednesday and Friday

3.2 Daily Schedule

Each session includes the following activities; the order and length of time may vary:

Outdoor play (30 minutes)

Weather permitting, the children play outside.

The children in the Enriched Program can travel on the school grounds (Kind Edward and the Academy) without parent permission. Parents are given notice of these spontaneous walks on the bulletin board outside the classroom.

Interactive Story Time (15 minutes)

The teachers read a story every day and allow the children to connect with the story through discussion of the various topics that come up.

Free Choice (30-40 minutes)

The children explore at the many classroom learning centers or take part in a scheduled craft.

Snack (15 minutes)

Snack time is a very relaxed period for the children to talk and share their interests. The teachers take this time to model good table manners and to facilitate conversation between the children.

Free Choice (30-40 minutes)

Clean Up (10 minutes)

After free play time, the children, teachers, and duty parent share in tidying and cleaning up toys.

Music and Reflection (15 minutes)

The children learn many songs and finger plays and use musical instruments. The time for reflection gives each child an opportunity to reflect on his or her day and to verbalize highlights.

3.3 Age Requirements

Children must be at least 30 months old to enroll. To enroll in the Enriched Program, children must be 4 years old before March 1 of the school year in which they enroll.

Children who are 30-35 months old can attend 1-2 times a week. Children 3 to 5 years old can attend 1-4 times a week. Children in the Enriched Program **MUST** attend a minimum of 3 and no more than 4 times a week, including Wednesday & Friday afternoons.

3.4 Enriched Program

An enriched program, offered on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, is designed to give four- and five-year-olds a more challenging environment. It focuses on developing the children's readiness for Kindergarten. Co-operative games during outdoor time, more challenging art projects, and emerging literacy are a large part of this program. The children form strong friendships, engage in beautiful co-operative play, improve their social skills, and develop a strong sense of self.

3.5 Field Trips

The Enriched Program offers field trips (out of class or in-class). You will receive a notice and permission form several days before the out-of-class field trip. Your child will not be allowed to participate unless the permission form is signed and returned to the teachers prior to the trip. The field trip notice form includes: start/finish time and date; where and how the children are traveling to/from; and who is joining the group (parent/child ratio). Parent help is welcomed (and usually necessary) on field trips.

3.6 Fees

The fee schedule, published annually prior to registration, will be based on the following structure:

Registration Fee per family (non-refundable and non-transferable)

Monthly Fees per child per session, with allowance for reduced rates if registering for more than two sessions per week

Field Trip Fee for children in Enriched Program only

Fees are due on registration, and payment is by post-dated, monthly cheques.

Fine Cheques: In addition, parents are required to provide post-dated cheques, as follows:

- Cleaning Bee Fine
- Fundraising Fine (covering September through December)
- Fundraising Fine (covering January through June)
- Casino Fine (Casino years only)
- Duty Parent Fines (three)

These cheques are cashed only if a parent does not attend a scheduled cleaning bee, participate in fundraising activities or casinos, or help on scheduled duty days. The cheques will be destroyed or returned at the end of the school year if they have not been cashed.

3.7 Notice to Cancel

One calendar month written notice is required to withdraw your child (e.g., if you wish to withdraw your child at the end of November, you must serve written notice before the end of October). Your child may attend school during the notice period.

If your child is registered for September, you must inform the Registrar before August 15 in order to receive September fees. After August 15, the one-month notice period operates and the September fees are non-refundable.

No withdrawals will be considered for the month of June.

3.8 Discipline

The teachers:

- model appropriate behaviour
- prevent incidents by redirecting a child
- recognize and verbally acknowledge the children's efforts to get along with each other
- set age-appropriate, consistent limits

The teachers strive to be aware of what is happening at all times so that they can intervene before an incident occurs. They use "natural consequences" to manage inappropriate behaviour. "Time-outs" are used sparingly.

Children must be able to function appropriately in a group. If a child exhibits excessive aggressive behaviour, the teachers and possibly a Board member will meet with the parent(s) to discuss the teachers' observations and help set up a positive behaviour program to help the child. If no progress is made, the teachers and the Board will decide whether the child should remain in the program.

3.9 Late Policy

If you are late picking up your child, you will be required to sign your name, note the date, and explain the reason in the school late book.

It is imperative that you call the school if you realize you will be late or if somebody else will be picking up your child. Your written notification is required for the teachers to release your child to anyone other than a designated parent or the designated person noted on your consent form.

3.10 Snack Policy

Parents are responsible for providing a snack for each child. As a learning environment, the Strathcona Nursery School wishes to encourage nutritious snacks in accordance with Canada's Food Guide (www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide). Fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grain crackers, deli meats, cheeses, yogurts, milk and 100% juices are excellent options.

For the safety of our children, **the Strathcona Nursery School does not allow any foods containing peanuts or tree nuts.** Approximately 1 in every 150 school age children has a peanut or nut allergy, and peanut allergy is the most common life-threatening food allergen in children. For more information including a listing of tree nuts, see the AAIA's "Peanut and Nut Allergies" brochure (www.aaia.ca/en/products.htm). If your child has any other food allergy, please speak directly with your teachers.

Food/drinks, utensils and containers will not be shared.

All children and adults are expected to wash their hands before and after snack time.

All containers, utensils, and the child's snack bag must be labeled with the child's name.

3.11 Health Records and Allergies

A detailed list of each child's health information is required on registration. This includes all medical information, allergies, and emergency contact numbers, as well as all requirements related to treatment. This information is kept in a prominent place in the classroom.

3.12 Health Policy

A child with the following symptoms is considered too sick to attend school:

- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Fever of 38° C or more
- Persistent cough, sneezing, runny nose
- Infected nasal discharge, e.g., thick, coloured nasal drainage
- Infected eyes
- A communicable disease, e.g., chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough

Please keep your child at home for 24 hours after symptoms end.

Do not bring sick children to school. Whether or not a child should be in class is up to the discretion of the teachers. Please respect their decision and take your child home and/or seek medical attention. If your child has been in contact with someone with a communicable disease, please inform the teachers.

3.13 Emergency Evacuation Plan

The emergency evacuation plan is posted in the classroom. In emergencies, the class will evacuate, along with the King Edward School, to the King Edward Academy – east across 101 Street. If there is a neighbourhood threat, then the class will either evacuate west to Old Strathcona High School or east to Millcreek School.

3.14 Toilet Training

Children do not need to be toilet-trained to attend Strathcona Nursery School. The classroom includes a child-size bathroom with a change table. Parents must provide diapers/training pants. Diaper changes are done by the teachers. Should you need to change a diaper while at the school, please follow the diaper change procedures above the change table.

3.15 Spare Clothes/Classroom Shoes

Above the coat racks are labeled boxes and bags for each child. Please leave a spare set of clothes in your child's bag.

Your child is required to wear running shoes in the classroom. Please label the shoes with your child's name and store them in the clothing box.

3.16 Toys

Children are encouraged to leave their toys, jewellery, and treasured items at home.

3.17 School Closures/Cancellations

The Strathcona Nursery School year begins the day after Labour Day and ends the Friday before the last day of classes at King Edward Elementary School.

Strathcona Nursery School will be closed for the following holidays:

- Thanksgiving Day (2nd Monday in October)
- Remembrance Day (November 11 when it falls on a weekday)
- Winter Recess (see EPSB calendar link on our web site)
- Alberta Family Day (3rd Monday in February)
- EPSB Teachers' Convention (see EPSB calendar link on our web site)
- Good Friday (Friday before Easter)
- Easter Monday (1st Monday following Easter)
- Spring Recess (see EPSB calendar link on our web site)
- Victoria Day (Monday before May 25)

Classes will be cancelled if:

- both Teachers are unable to attend classes for any reason
- we are otherwise unable to meet the regulated Staff-Child ratio
- King Edward Elementary School is closed due to weather
- the temperature reaches -40° C, including wind chill, as reported by Environment Canada (780-468-4940)
- In other cases, the Duty Roster Coordinator and the President or Vice-President must be in agreement before a class cancellation can occur.

3.18 Inclement Weather

We take the children outside every session unless the temperature is below -15° C with a wind chill. If in doubt, please dress your child to be outside.

3.19 Communication with Parents

Mailboxes are provided inside the classroom for each family in order to pass on information to parents. A bulletin board located outside the classroom keeps families informed of daily activities, upcoming meetings, etc.

If you have any concerns about your child, please talk to the teacher directly. Please feel free as well to contact any member of the Board. Their names and contact information are provided on the bulletin board inside the classroom.

4 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES IN A COOPERATIVE

As parents of a child registered at Strathcona Nursery School, you are members of a parent-led cooperative preschool, which means the very existence of the school depends on your commitment and dedication throughout the school year. The parent body works together toward common goals, the most important of which is to provide a happy, satisfying preschool experience for our children.

You are encouraged to talk to the teachers about your special interests, hobbies, work, etc. that you would like to share with the children.

Your annual responsibilities in the cooperative are

- Duty parenting
- Volunteering on a committee or on the Board
- Fundraising/Casino participation
- Working one cleaning bee
- Attending both Semi-Annual General Meetings

These responsibilities are described below.

4.1 Duty Parenting

The classes depend on volunteer parents to ensure the low child/adult ratios. One parent attends each session. The more sessions that your child(ren) attends weekly, the more duty days you will be assigned. For instance, if your child is attending three times a week, you will have a duty day approximately once every six weeks.

You are a duty parent only on the days your child(ren) attends. You are required to attend duty days in each of your child(ren)'s separate sessions. If there are prior commitments preventing you from being able to participate as a duty parent on specific days, please do not register your child in that session.

As duty parent, you rotate with the families registered in each session your child attends. You will be assigned a duty day at least a month in advance, leaving you plenty of time to plan for that day. It is each parent's responsibility to arrange for a replacement on his or her given day if needed. A duty parent can be a parent, family member, or friend.

A parent contact list is provided so that you may switch days with another parent in the same session. If a switch is made, please indicate it on the Master Duty Roster on the bulletin board outside the classroom so that the teachers are aware of the change.

If you miss a duty day without making alternate arrangements, one duty fine cheque will be cashed.

4.1.1 Duty Day Expectations

- A duty parent must arrive 15 minutes before the start of class in order to familiarize him/herself with the planned activities of the day, etc. The teachers will offer direction on how the parent can assist in class preparation.
- Duty parents are required to interact and communicate with the children.
- Duty parents are expected to participate enthusiastically and allow the children to direct the play.

4.1.2 Code of Ethics

It is the duty and responsibility of all helpers to follow the teachers' direction, provide support, and actively promote a positive learning environment.

4.1.3 Confidentiality

Any information shared by a teacher must be kept confidential and not discussed outside the classroom under any circumstances. Duty parents should avoid making any statements about a particular child, including his or her own, the teacher, or the program in front of the children or parents. Any questions or concerns can be discussed with the teachers or Board outside of classroom time.

4.1.4 Siblings/Newborns and Duty Days

Under our licensing agreement, it is not possible for parents to bring a sibling when they are duty parents. Families of newborns do not need to participate in duty days until the newborn is 4 months old. Arrangements for exemption should be made well in advance with the Duty Roster Coordinator.

4.2 Volunteering on a Committee or on the Board

4.2.1 Board Meetings

Parents are encouraged to attend Board meetings and bring forward motions that Board members can present. Members are welcome to participate in discussion and present opinions and input. However, only Board members may vote at Board meetings.

4.2.2 Board/Committees

Strathcona Nursery School operates by a series of volunteer positions. Each family is required to take on a position on the Board or on a committee.

Board positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Co-Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Duty Roster Coordinator, Fundraising Chair, Volunteer Coordinator.

Committees and other volunteer roles: Cleaning bee coordinator, Supplies/material purchaser, Maintenance, Marketing, Social events, Teachers' secretary, Website coordinator, Fundraising committee, Imagination market, Play dough maker(s), Photo coordinator, Teachers' helper(s), Recycle return, Laundry/sewing.

4.3 Fundraising/Casino Participation

Fundraising campaigns take place throughout the year and ensure the financial viability of our preschool. Full participation in all fundraising is mandatory. Every second year, the preschool takes part in a casino; this is the backbone of our fundraising campaign. The revenue we receive from the casino allows us the benefit of two full-time teachers and otherwise contributes heavily to the financial viability of the school. Each family must volunteer to work one shift at the casino. Various jobs and times are available. On non-casino years, the nursery school does small-scale fundraising, e.g., raffles, chocolate sales, etc. We are always looking for new and creative fundraising ideas. Your input is most welcome.

If you do not participate in fundraising or the casino, your fundraising or casino fine cheque(s) will be cashed.

4.4 Cleaning Bees

One member from each family must attend at least one monthly toy cleaning bee, where all toys are thoroughly cleaned. The toy cleaning bee lasts up to three hours. If you are not able to attend your scheduled bee, you may switch with another family. If you do not participate, your cleaning bee fine cheque will be cashed.

4.5 Attending Semi-Annual General Meetings

As Members of this Cooperative, *you are the owners of this business*. A “Member” refers to a family unit, as a whole. At the Semi-Annual General Meetings in October and June, you elect the Board members who act as Trustees responsible for the Society’s programs, image and assets. You will hear the status of the school from the teachers and your Directors, help elect the Board, and vote on recommended changes to the Society Bylaws.

A minimum attendance as dictated in our Society Bylaws, called Quorum, is required at these meetings in order for our business to be conducted. Written notice of these meetings will be given at least two weeks in advance. Please plan to attend.

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Parental involvement is essential for the effective operation of the cooperative. The quality of the preschool is directly related to the efforts and commitments of the entire parent body.