



# Birch Hills Academy

*The Power of Effective Learning*

**Handbook**  
**2015/2016**

## Table of Contents

Program Descriptions .....	3
Hours of Operation .....	5
Parental Involvement .....	5
Ensuring Student Success Policy .....	6
Late Arrival Policy .....	7
Illness, Medications and Injury .....	8
Absences .....	9
Safety .....	9
Lunch and Snack Programs .....	9
Discharges .....	10
Closures .....	11
Clothing and Personal Belongings .....	11
Confidentiality/Release of Information .....	11
Inclusion .....	12
Discipline .....	12

## Program Descriptions

BIRCH HILLS ACADEMY offers private elementary and preschool programs (junior primary, preprimary and morning) to provide today's children with the educational foundation they require to prepare them for their place in an ever changing world. The preschool programs are licensed with the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development.

The environment and curriculum is based on the fundamental philosophy that students move fluidly along a learning continuum. This movement is most effective when students *actively and meaningfully* engage in their learning.

*A differentiated instructional model* (Differentiated instruction utilizes instructionally intelligent strategies based on best practices that enable teachers to create different pathways to learning that responds to the needs of diverse learners) respects student's learning profiles, readiness, and interests as they develop and move along the learning continuum.

*Small class sizes:* (16 students) ensure individual attention and lead to greater student gains. Teachers utilize instruction that is responsive to student needs.

*Periodic exercise routines* (early morning exercise routines stimulate the brain for the cognitive tasks that will follow in the classroom and calming exercises after the lunch break enable students to focus in the afternoon) throughout the day enhance cognitive focus and physical fitness.

*Fine Arts:* (students experience opportunities to acquire basic skills in kinesthetic, musical, spatial, and visual intelligences applicable to learning in all other subjects) programs that complement creative and analytical thinking, enhance reading, writing and math skills, develop problem solving abilities and higher-order thinking skills along with skills necessary for self-esteem. A Creative Arts event showcases student achievement.

Elementary students receive French language instruction, physical education, music, dance, art and drama classes. As well, these subject areas are integrated into the classroom curriculum.

Community Service projects throughout the year promote social awareness and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate and experience the impact that they can have in their world.

*Preschool Programs:* (Licensed through the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development) Young children acquire meaningful information and knowledge about their physical and social world by *actively* participating in many different experiences with real objects and real people.

The *goal* of the program is to provide opportunities for children to develop into confident, competent human beings in all four growth areas – physical, social, intellectual and emotional. To attain this goal the following basic premises will serve as guidelines in planning the daily program.

- 1) We learn best and retain knowledge longer, when we have a need and/or a desire to know,
- 2) Rote learning creates robots,
- 3) Learning comes through INVOLVEMENT,
- 4) Children want to win the approval of the adults who are close to them,
- 5) Learning begins where the child IS, starting with the familiar and progressing to new,
- 6) Children learn through PLAY.

The *primary role* of the teachers is to guide and facilitate the learning process by presenting developmentally appropriate materials and activities that pose additional challenges and stimulate the child's curiosity. Further extensions of the child's own thinking is the desired goal. The teachers will be aware of the progress of each child in each area of growth so that individual differences in ability and interest are personally respected. Enhancement of the child's self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning are of paramount importance.

Sounds along with their corresponding letter(s) symbols are introduced to children through systematic and purposeful, evidenced based activities to strengthen and develop the auditory and visual perception channel.

MusIQ an instrumental music program utilizing award-winning interactive software and digital piano keyboards is delivered to the children once per week. An additional music class focuses on song and beat. Junior Primary students participate in two physical education classes, a creative movement class, and a French class. Preprimary students participate in a MusIQ class and French class.

CREATIVE KIDS EDUCATION CENTRE offers licensed before and/or after school care, as well as day camp programs over Christmas, March break and the summer months.

The school-age program is based on the belief that school age children require a balance of outdoor play as well as a variety of indoor play experiences. These will include opportunities for group and individual activities, active and quiet activities & child-initiated activities. The goal of the program is to foster cooperation and understanding of each other, to enhance the children's development of self-esteem and problem solving skills. Children are encouraged to make choices from a range of activities and centers: recreational activities (indoor & outdoor play), creative/dramatic play, reading and listening center, art and crafts, construction, science and manipulatives/games.

### **Hours of Operation**

The centre opens at 7:00 am and closes at 6:00 pm Monday through Friday for the before & after school and day camp programs.

Morning Preschool: **9:00am - noon**

Junior Primary & Preprimary: **9:00am – 2:30pm**

Levels One & Two (Primary – Grade One): **8:30am – 2:45pm**

Levels Three – Six (Grades Two – Five): **8:30am – 3:00pm**

Levels Seven & Eight (middle school): **8:30am – 3:15pm**

### **Parental Involvement**

Parents are welcome in the school and classrooms. Please speak with the classroom teacher if you are interested in spending time in the classroom or assisting with field trips.

Volunteers play a role in the success of the school's programs – library, lunch monitors, classroom. Volunteers working directly with children must complete a child abuse registry check.

Birch Hills Academy School Advisory Board: This board is comprised of parents and community members to provide advice and recommendations specific to school policies and to participate in organization planning activities, both short and long term. If you are interested in becoming a member contact Pam Streeter.

*Licensed Programs Parent Committee:* The parent committee provides a forum in which parents give input and receive notice of any matters of interest or concern to parents. The committee is comprised of a minimum five members of which at least three members are parents of children currently enrolled. Meetings are held at least twice per year and are open to all parents of enrolled children. The committee may discuss any matters of interest or concern to parents and include the following:

- Safety, care and well-being of the children
- Status of the centre's license
- Programs
- Equipment and materials available to children
- Staffing patterns and qualifications

Current members of the committee are:

- Pam Streeter, Dustin Hickey, Amanda Kirton, Sheila MacNeil, and Danette Whalen

## **Birch Hills Academy**

## **Ensuring Student Success**

**Purpose:** This agreement will provide information and outline commitments to ensure staff, parents and students:

- Are aware of the connection of nutrition, sleep, brain states, and consistent routines/discipline to student success
- Make connections between families and school
- Are successful with the phonemic awareness program
- Understand the impact of media on child development

### **Agreement:**

#### 1. Beliefs

- School-age children require 10 – 12 hours of sleep per night. Lack of sleep can cause lethargic, impulsive, irritable or hyper behaviours in school impacting on attention and peer relationships.
- Healthy foods promote alertness and attention. Foods high in sugars leave students tired and hungry part way through the school day, and can lead to overeating.
- Purposeful, school-based, early morning routines help set the stage for optimal learning
- Development of phonemic awareness skills is the single most important variable in reading success

#### 2. Agreement between Birch Hills Academy and Families

- Birch Hills Academy agrees to host a series of workshops that parents/guardians agree to attend. Topics will include Nutrition, Sleep, Brain-Based Learning, Media Influences, Organization/Routines, Phonemic Awareness

## **Birch Hills Academy**

## **Late Arrival Policy**

**Purpose:** This policy will provide information, guidelines, and procedures to ensure staff, parents and students:

- Are aware of the importance of arriving on time to assist students to develop socially and academically.
- Are knowledgeable of the procedure upon late arrival.

---

**Policy Statement:**

1. Values

Birch Hills Academy is committed to:

- Providing a learning environment that supports the development of each student, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically.
- Responding to research and implementing evidenced based programs to support individual student success.
- Respecting the importance of positive and respectful interactions with teachers and peers, and providing opportunities for such.

2. Background

The first 15 minutes of the school day provide opportunities for students to enter the classroom, greet their teacher and peers, and interact in social activities. This period of time allows students to adjust to a change in setting (home to school or before school program to school) and for excitation levels that are elevated from this change to decrease.

The next 15 minute block engages students in purposeful movement activities that support the brain in achieving a state of relaxed alertness, necessary for optimal learning. Students then proceed to their class to start the instructional activities of the day.

Interruptions such as those caused by students entering the class late, as instructional activities are in progress, elevate the excitation levels of all students. For the student that is arriving late these excitation levels are already heightened.

---

**Procedure upon Late Arrival (after the 15 minute social block):**

- Students shall remove outdoor clothing and change into their indoor footwear. They are not to enter the classroom.
- With their parent, students shall proceed to the common area and report to the adult present.

- At the schools discretion students may be required to participate in a series of movement activities to 'ready' them for entering the classroom learning environment.
- Students will proceed to their class at a time that will not be disruptive
- Work missed due to late arrival will be sent home for completion recognizing that in many instances classes are engaged in hands on activities, discussions and other activities that cannot be sent home.

## **Illness, Medications and Injury**

### Illness

In order to ensure a healthy environment, sick children should be kept at home. Should your child become ill while at school you will be notified immediately.

If your child will not be attending school due to illness please advise us as to the nature of the illness and/or symptoms. Call 832-5437 or email [gstreeter@creativekids.info](mailto:gstreeter@creativekids.info).

### Exclusions:

Under the Guidelines for Communicable disease Prevention and Control for Child Care Programs children with the any of the following symptoms are to be kept at home: fever, diarrhea, vomiting, persistent cough, breathing difficulty, rash with fever). Children attending the centre should be *well enough to participate in outside activities*.

Children with communicable diseases such as (but not limited to) Chicken Pox, German Measles, Whooping Cough, Measles, or Mumps, shall stay home until such time as they are deemed non-contagious by a physician or public health nurse. It is acceptable to send children with mild colds to the centre as long as they are not sneezing or coughing frequently.

### Administration of Medication

When a physician prescribes medication for your child or if you have non-prescription medication that needs to be administered to your child during school hours you must complete the Authorization to Administer Medication form. Medication will be administered by assigned staff. Prescription medication will be administered only under a physician's orders. Medication must be supplied in the original container bearing the child's name, directions for administering the medication, the date and the physician's name.

### Injury



If a child receives a superficial wound or injury, staff will administer first aid. (all staff are trained in first aid) This includes bumps, scratches, bruises, splinters, nosebleeds and small cuts.

Should a child sustain an injury or condition that requires medical intervention then staff will call a parent/guardian and depending on severity either transport the child to a local emergency room or clinic, or call 911 for paramedic assistance. A written report of the incident shall be completed.

If a parent's religious beliefs preclude the administering of medical attention, the parent shall inform the centre prior to enrollment, in writing, of the procedures to be taken.

### **Absences**

It is very important that you call and advise us when your child is going to absent from the centre and the reasons for their absence. 832-5437 or email [gstreeter@creativekids.info](mailto:gstreeter@creativekids.info).

### **Safety**

The safety of your child is of utmost concern to us. The following policies have been developed to assist in this goal.

1. Students will be released only to persons specified on the registration form unless prior arrangements are made with us.
2. Non-slip footwear such as sneakers are recommended as slippers are not permitted by the Fire Marshall.
3. Fire drills will be practiced at regular intervals in a non-threatening manner.
4. Parents of junior primary students must accompany them into and out of the centre.
5. Students in the before and after school program and the day camps will be signed in and out each day.

### **Lunch and Snack Programs**

#### Elementary Students

A menu will be sent home the end of the month for the next month. Students circle their choices and return to the classroom teacher with payment (\$5.00) per meal. All meals include milk and fruit.

## Junior Primary & Preprimary

Lunch, along with a morning and afternoon snack, is provided to all *junior primary students*.

- All foods or beverages from an outside source (caterer, parent) must be from an establishment permitted by the Dept. of Agriculture *and* comply with the Food & Beverage Criteria. The product must have a list of ingredients, with any special preparation, storage or serving instructions clearly labeled. For specific special classroom occasions further detail will be provided by the classroom teachers.
- Food may be brought from home provided that it is a medical requirement or due to religious or cultural beliefs.
- Teachers are responsive to children's cues around hunger and provide snacks and meals outside of the regular schedule if required.
- Teachers provide a meal environment that is relaxing and enjoyable, modeling healthy eating practices and positive attitudes towards food. Food is provided at each table and children are encouraged to take a portion of all the choices in response to their levels of hunger and to recognize when they are full. Conversation is encouraged as teachers sit with the children. Children participate in the set up and clean up of meal times, and will at times assist in the preparation of food where appropriate.

## Before &/or After School Program

*School age children* are provided with an afternoon snack and on days where they have full attendance they are provided with a morning and afternoon snack. On full days where school age children are in attendance over the noon meal time they may purchase lunch or bring a lunch from home – lunches from home must be labeled with your child's name and use ice packs when necessary.

## Food Allergies or Restrictions

The centre is to be advised, in writing, of *any food allergies or restrictions* at the time of enrollment. A list is posted for staff use in the food preparation area.

## **Discharges**

Birch Hills Academy reserves the right to discharge a child should it be deemed, by the management team, that the child is not suited to the school's programs or vice versa. The Director and staff will work with the student and parent/guardian with any support

services to attempt to arrive at a workable solution before making the decision to discharge.

## **Closures**

School Closures – please refer to the school calendar for holidays and PD days.

It is the policy of Birch Hills Academy to cancel *school and preschool programs* when public schools are closed due to inclement weather and conditions relating to inclement weather. *There may be times when we decide to open* with the public schools closed, eg. if the public schools are closed due to maintenance not weather problems (parking lots not plowed). Please note that we are revisiting this policy.

Closures will be posted on our website by 6:45am (provided there is not a power interruption, in which case the centre will be closed) – [www.creativekids.info](http://www.creativekids.info) – and on radio station CBC One – 90.5 FM or call 832-5437.

For the before &/or after school program the centre will be closed New Year's Day, Nova Scotia Heritage Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Natal Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. If these holidays land on a weekend then the centre will be closed on the Friday or Monday designated. During the Christmas break the centre may be closed additional days at the discretion of the management team. (ie – when five or less students are enrolled)

The centre will close in instances (but not limited to) of power outages extending beyond two hours and lack of water.

## **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Clothing and personal belongings should be **labeled**, including jackets, boots, hats, mittens, scarves etc. Please label inside the clothing not on the outside (for safety reasons)

Students should dress appropriately for the weather and season.

'Lost and found' clothing and belongings will be held for approximately one month and then donated to a charity.

## **Confidentiality/Release of Information**

Information contained within student files and conversations between staff and parents/guardians concerning students will be considered confidential. Birch Hills Academy will not release confidential information to any individual, agency, school district, etc., without first obtaining permission in writing from parents/guardians. In cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, proper authorities have legal access to a student's file with or without parent/guardian consent.

### **Inclusion**

Creative Kids Education Centre (is an inclusive centre) and is in receipt of the Supported Child Care Grant to support inclusive programs. These programs are the junior primary, preprimary and before and/or after school programs.

### **Discipline**

Respect is fundamental to the operation of all Birch Hills Academy/CKEC programs. Respect for ourselves, others and centre property is essential for effective, play, learning and socializing.

The behaviour management policy of BHA/CKEC is designed to help each child:

- 1) establish a positive self-concept
- 2) tolerate frustration
- 3) channel emotions into socially acceptable outlets
- 4) increase self-control

Staff will work towards these goals by making each child aware:

- 1) that it is alright to be sad or angry as all people have these feelings.
- 2) That it is not alright to hurt people either emotionally or physically.
- 3) Of activities to release feelings of anger, frustration etc. I.e. finger painting and manipulating playdough, ripping newspaper...

The following techniques will be used by staff for positively guiding children in learning appropriate behaviour:

- 1) Discipline statements will be expressed positively wherever possible and in a calm manner. We will offer a child choices as to what he can do rather than what he cannot do.

- 2) We will adopt a positive attitude towards each child which includes enjoyment and respect for each child as an individual.
- 3) Clear cut limits will be set and enforced consistently and fairly.
- 4) A gentle adult touch during a frustrating experience may be used to have a calming effect on a child, thereby avoiding or extinguishing destructive behaviour.
- 5) We will always be available to listen, in a caring manner, to a child during a period of upset behaviour.
- 6) A brief period of redirection or time out may sometimes be required. A child will never be placed alone in a room but may be removed from an activity for a period of quiet time.

Should a situation arise that requires teacher intervention each child will be:

- 1) encouraged to describe the behaviour that led to the problem.
- 2) asked to think about how the behaviour may be affecting other children or adults and how they would feel in the same situation.
- 3) Permitted to negotiate, to add their own ideas and to work to a mutual goal (cooperation).

The following forms of discipline will never be used:

- 1) Corporal punishment, including but not limited to the following:
  - striking a child directly or with any physical object
  - shaking, shoving, spanking, or other forms of aggressive physical contact and
  - requiring or forcing a child to repeat physical movements.
- 2) Harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional or physical.

Possible responses to inappropriate behaviour are but not limited to:

- 1) A reminder
- 2) Discussion with staff
- 3) A note or call home
- 4) Community service – a helpful act that gives back to the school or individual
- 5) Loss of privileges
- 6) In cases where property has been damaged or lost, replacement may be requested
- 7) Meeting with student, staff, parents and management
- 8) Discharged from centre