

# Early Childhood Handbook 2020-21





# Philosophy

Our play-based philosophy allows us to provide the highest quality early childhood program within a nurturing Jewish environment. We use developmentally appropriate practice to ensure children's spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive, creative and social growth.





# EXPLORE, DISCOVER, CREATE, LEARN



Welcome to our Early Childhood program. We are delighted that you are part of our VTT family and we look forward to a wonderful year together. Please use this handbook to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of our Ris-honim and Junior Kindergarten program. We want to be certain that your child has the very best early childhood education experience possible, and we thank you for entrusting us with that privilege and responsibility.

## Program Goals

We are dedicated to providing the highest quality early childhood education program within a secure, nurturing, and stimulating Jewish environment.

The goal of our department is to nurture each child in a warm, loving and safe atmosphere. By nurturing and respecting the individuality of each child we encourage the child's sense of well-being. Our child-centered environment fosters children's feelings of competency in their own abilities and

allows them to become valued members of our early childhood program and school community.

We want each child to develop a strong Jewish identity based on joyful experiences and to immerse the students in the warmth and beauty of a traditional Jewish life. We strive to embrace Judaism in such a manner that all families feel comfortable regardless of home religious observance.

## Hours

Our half day program runs Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Our full day program runs Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. with the option to pick up **no later than 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.** Our Ris-honim and Junior Kindergarten follow the same Shabbat and holiday dismissal schedule as the rest of the school. Thus, students must be picked up by 3:20 p.m. on Fridays and at 2:20 p.m. on early dismissal Fridays (November through March), with the option to pick up **no later than 3:20 p.m.** When there is an early dismissal for a Jewish holiday, all



classes in the early childhood program will also dismiss at 11:25 a.m. **Parents are expected to pick up their children on time. Failure to do so will result in late charges of \$1 per minute.**

Parent-Teacher Conferences occur twice a year (in November and March). Dismissal for the full-day programs on those days is at 3:20 p.m. (Wednesday and Thursday in November & March).

**During COVID-19, teachers will greet their students at the 26th Avenue entrance; parents will be given a binder to sign their children in as per Vancouver Coastal Health licensing requirements. Children will be escorted to the 26th Avenue entrance for end of day pick-up; parents will sign out their children at that time.**

### Gradual Entry

This process provides an opportunity for separation between parents and children to occur in a positive and gradual manner. It gives students time to adjust to one another, their teachers and the classroom in smaller groups before the children meet together as a class, and allows teachers to spend time with each child in a high adult to child ratio. This facilitates the relationship between the teachers and your child, as well as a sense of belonging.

### Separation Anxiety

Some strategies that will help cope with your child's separation anxiety:

- ✓ Always say goodbye and keep goodbyes short and sweet;
- ✓ Don't hover around or ask for permission to leave;
- ✓ Don't say you're coming back if you are not.

Many youngsters experience separation anxiety at some point in their early school years. It is most often simply because it is really hard for them to say goodbye, and once resolved can recur after children have been away from school.

Separation anxiety is a normal process for both children and parents and our teachers are well prepared and equipped to deal with it.

### Curriculum

While some early childhood programs focus on early academics, we support the overwhelming amount of research that proves that children learn best through play.

Our curriculum follows developmentally appropriate practices evolving from credible research into child development. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs and strengths of each child and foster growth in all developmental domains. It allows children to make choices, encourages independence and integrates Judaism throughout the day.

The enriched environment maximizes each child's opportunity to explore, discover, create and learn through play with materials that are stimulating, challenging and creative.

We plan our curriculum around Judaic and general themes as well as from ideas that emerge from the children's interests and passions.

### Shabbat and Jewish Holidays

We celebrate Shabbat every Friday. All Jewish holidays are explored through stories, drama, art, music, math and science activities, baking and eating. We also introduce simple Hebrew vocabulary related to each holiday. We have special celebrations for Hanukkah, Purim, a mock seder for Pesach, a big birthday celebration for Israel on Yom Ha'atzma'ut and a special picnic for Lag B'Omer. \*Due to COVID-19, baking activities will be suspended until public health deems it safe to resume.

### Communication

It is very important that the lines of communication between the school and parents are always open. If you are concerned about your child in the classroom, please talk to the teachers. If this is not satisfactory, or if you have a question about any other aspects of the overall program, please contact the Early Childhood Director.

Newsletters containing pertinent information are sent by email. Emails are frequently sent from the school; please be sure to read them as they often contain important and pertinent information.

If your child is leaving with anyone else, please indicate those plans in the morning sign-in binder. If your regular schedule or contact numbers change on a particular day, please email your child's teachers and copy the Early Childhood Director.

Please let us know if you are going to be away, if your child is sick, or if there are any significant changes that occur in your child's life, for example, moving to a new home, birth of a sibling, etc. In the case of absence from school, please email our school office at [office@talmudtorah.com](mailto:office@talmudtorah.com) as well as your classroom teachers for official notification of your child's absence.



Parent-teacher conferences take place twice a year. You do not have to wait for a conference – teachers are available to talk with you throughout the year. We ask that you do not approach teachers with specific problems at the beginning or end of the school day as teachers' focus is on the children. Please email them to request a (virtual) meeting.

### Clothing

Please dress children in clothing that can be worn **without worry**. **Although we try to use washable paints and markers, some colours and materials do stain.** Our faculty cannot be responsible for stained or messy clothing.

The students play outside every day; please send appropriate outdoor clothing such as rain boots, sun hats and sunscreen, etc. You are welcome to leave these in your child's cubby. Students in the full day program should have full body coverage (e.g., "muddy buddy" or waterproof gear) to be prepared for wet weather.

Children must wear socks and closed shoes every day. Sandals or flip-flops are unsafe and uncomfortable--**and are not permitted on the playground.**

We ask that each child have a complete change of clothes kept in their cubby for the entire year. Accidents happen and we want students to be dry and comfortable at all times. If children change into their extra clothes, please replace them the next day. Full day students should have at least two sets of clothes in their cubby.

Please help foster toileting independence by avoiding belts, buckles, tights and overalls. **Please label everything.**

Our early childhood educators are devoted to supporting your children develop into healthy, confident, sensitive and aware young people with strong Jewish identities. We look forward to spending the year getting to know your family.



## Toileting

Children must be toilet trained to attend our program. Accidents happen and are expected--please always have a change of clothes in your child's cubby. Please contact the Early Childhood Director if you need support in this regard.

## Behaviour and Discipline

We give children in our program the tools and language they need to resolve their problems peacefully while being available to guide them. Children aged 3 or 4 are not developmentally equipped to "share." We offer students choices within carefully defined boundaries. We take turns. We use language. If a child is behaving in an unacceptable or unsafe manner, they will be asked to choose another activity or another area to play. If a student demonstrates ongoing unacceptable or unsafe behaviour, we will work with parents to try to resolve this. A child may be asked to leave the program if their behaviour is severely destructive or physically threatening to the well-being and safety of themselves, other children or the educators, and additional supports to accommodate are either unsuccessful or unavailable. For additional behaviour resources, visit [www.healthplanning.gov.vc.ca/ccf/child](http://www.healthplanning.gov.vc.ca/ccf/child).

## Parent Conduct & Discipline Policy

VTT promotes a climate of mutual respect for the rights of others. Students and parents are expected to respect the rights and privileges of other students, parents, teachers, school staff and visitors. Parents are responsible for abiding by all policies and procedures while in or representing VTT. Parents are expected to work in respectful partnership with all members of the school community. Thoughtful, respectful communication with faculty, school leadership, administration and other parents is essential to student success. **The consequences for not acting in accordance with this Code of Conduct include revoking privileges, discharge from the school, and non re-enrollment of family for subsequent school years. Please see our link to our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy: <http://storage.talmudtorah.com/harassment.pdf>**

## Toys from home

Our classrooms are equipped with an abundance of toys and materials. **Please do not allow children to bring toys from home as they will invariably get lost or broken, and are a distraction.** If your child has a comfort item such as a special blanket or stuffed animal that has to be brought to school, it will be used for nap time only (Rishonim). Please note that our faculty cannot be responsible for any missing toys.

## Food & Snacks

During COVID-19, VTT will not be providing snacks to students. The exception is Friday challah, birthdays (small treat provided by VTT) and special foods associated with different Jewish holidays. Please ensure to send one snack if your child is in the half day program and at least two snacks for full day students, in addition to sending a lunch and labelled water bottle. All food must be either dairy or vegetarian and nut-free. Full-day students can order a hot, kosher lunch online through our caterer, The Perfect Bite.





Please do not allow your children to come into the school with any nut products as we have several children with severe allergies. We ask that if your children eat peanut butter before coming to school that you thoroughly wash their hands and faces

**Birthdays**

All children’s birthdays are celebrated with a special, small treat provided by VTT. If you plan on celebrating your child’s birthday outside of VTT, please do not hand out birthday party invitations at school, even if the whole class is invited. Out of consideration to all students, please avoid creating a situation where a few students are left out. We take pride in being an inclusive school community. Class lists with email addresses are shared at the beginning of the school year by the class parent.

**Being that we are a Jewish school, we ask families to refrain from scheduling birthday parties/gatherings on Shabbat or Jewish holidays as some of our students will naturally be left out. Our goal is to be an inclusive community, respecting all expressions of Jewish observance.**

**VTT Illness Policy**

While the world is grappling with the **COVID-19 pandemic**, VTT must follow the strictest protocols as directed by the Ministry of Health and the BC Centre for Disease Control to ensure the health and safety of our entire community. **VTT has a zero tolerance illness policy.**

**For Non-COVID related Illness:**

- For respiratory illness, the individual must not have a fever within the last 24 hours without taking medication
- For gastric symptoms (nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal pain) individuals must remain away from school for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

**For COVID-19 like symptoms (with no screening complete)**

- An individual may return to school when they are symptom free (except for mild cough) AND
- It’s been a minimum of 10 days since the onset of symptoms

**Returning After a Positive COVID-19 Case**

- When Public Health has advised it is safe to do so.

**COVID-19 Screening Returns Negative:**

- When an individual seeks a COVID-19 screening and the result is negative, return to non-COVID-19 related illness guidelines stated above.

**Daily Checks for Respiratory Illness and Staying Home When Sick**

- All students, staff, parents and caregivers who have symptoms of COVID-19 or travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days, OR were identified by Public Health as a close contact of a confirmed case must stay home and isolate.
- Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of **common cold, influenza, COVID-19**, or other infectious respiratory diseases before sending them to VTT.
- Children who are ill, including children of essential service providers, are not be permitted to attend VTT.
- At drop-off the teachers will have a sign in/out binder. In addition to signing in/out the child daily, parents or caregivers will be required to sign that their child is healthy to attend VTT. If a parent or caregiver is unsure if a child should self-isolate, they

should either use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#), contact 8-1-1 or the public health unit. They may also contact their family physician or nurse practitioner to be assessed for COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.

- If a child becomes ill or develops a fever while at school, parents will be called to take the child home. When called, parents are expected to pick up their child immediately.

Sneezes and Diseases (Vancouver Coastal Health ([www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)) is an excellent source of information for common childhood illnesses; however, always check with your classroom teachers regarding returning to school after an illness.)

- In the case of diagnosed communicable diseases, we ask parents to notify the Early Childhood Director;
- In the case of head lice, a child must begin treatment before returning to school. Parents must inform the school as well to contain the spread. Lice a common childhood nuisance and there is no shame associated with a child getting head lice.
- As a licensed facility of Vancouver Coastal Health, VCH may request to review our students' records.

Your child's safety and well-being are of primary importance to us and we endeavour to make the environment as safe as possible. In the event of any minor accidents or injuries, all our teachers are certified in first aid. In more serious cases, an ambulance will be called and we will contact you as soon as possible. Please make sure all contact information is always up to date.

