Islesboro Preschool

ISLESBORO PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

Mission

The mission of Islesboro Preschool is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment that builds on a child's natural curiosity and love of learning. We value purposeful play and creativity and strive to create a space where each child can independently explore and grow while learning respect and responsibility to self, others, and the environment. Parent collaboration is critical to young children's learning as we strive to prepare them for life within and outside the classroom.

Educational Philosophy

There is strong evidence that an early education emphasizing play-based Learning through experiences of interest to the children leads to critical skills acquisition, increased self-esteem, and, ultimately, higher achievement. Our educators value children as individuals and respect and celebrate their diverse backgrounds. This approach allows children to take risks and build on their interests and innate joy in learning that will continue serving them for a lifetime. Teachers create intentional learning environments to support the lessons and goals around this child-centered curriculum. Rooted in close relationships that make children feel safe and connected in our island setting, our teachers strive to create a community of motivated learners, each child excited about gaining new experiences, new friendships, and new opportunities to explore and grow.

Program

The preschool will provide an atmosphere that encourages social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth and development of the child as a whole. Using the Maine Early Childhood Guidelines and Infant/Toddler Guidelines, our program will structure activities to meet those goals. Programs such as Handwriting Without Tears and Creative Curriculum will provide structure and assessments to guide and monitor children along their developmental continuum. The day will include a variety of activities which includes sharing and conversation time, stories, songs, fingerplays; creative arts and crafts; games and large muscle play with outside play; nature, science, and math activities; activities that support social & emotional learning; on-island field trips; and exposure to readiness skills for Kindergarten.

Number of Children (Maximum): 20

Rights of Children. Children receiving Child care from Child Care Facilities have the following rights:

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation
2. Each child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the child
3. Each child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule
4. Each Child must be provided child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the child care facility.
6. Each child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the child care facility
7. Each child has the right to developmentally appropriate activities, materials, and equipment
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to the policies and practices of the child care facility.

Standards

Islesboro Preschool, incorporated in 1981 as a non-profit 501c3, is licensed by the State of Maine and complies with all the standards put out by the Department of Health and Human Services. Its operation is governed by a Board of Directors and an Executive Director. Each class is taught by a teacher with an appropriate degree and/or work experience.

Incorporation

An annual meeting of the corporation is held each year. At this meeting, board members are voted on and annual policies are determined. The By-Laws of the corporation are available in the Director's office. Quarterly board meetings will convene on an as-needed basis when any new policies can be discussed.

Affirmative Action Statement

IPS advertises in the public media. Children are admitted regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, or religion. The IPS complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It will work with agencies and families to support children with special needs.

Communication

Teachers may be reached through Brightwheel and the Director can be reached at director@islesboropreschool.org. You may also call the preschool at 734-8386

Good communication is of the utmost importance. Staff will do their best to communicate daily at pick-up while maintaining privacy. We welcome questions, feedback, or discussions of any kind that are oriented towards a positive outcome for the children. Sensitive issues will be discussed in private at a mutually beneficial time.

Parents are encouraged to visit the preschool anytime with notice, unless health protocols exist. If the teacher cannot speak with you, please understand that the children come first during class time. A call may be arranged, or leave a message at your convenience.

Islesboro Preschool uses the Brightwheel system, an application that can be downloaded through the Apple or Google Play Store. Through Brightwheel, Islesboro Preschool updates families throughout their student's day. All communications between staff and parents/guardians take place through Brightwheel. For larger announcements like school closures and contagious illnesses, an email to parents will also be sent out.

Location

Islesboro Preschool is located at 152 Main Road, next to the Town Office Buildings. The entrance is through the Town Office parking lot and goes to our driveway. Please adhere to the speed limits the Town of Islesboro set when entering the lot. The driveway to the Main Road is an exit only.

Enrollment Guidelines

Children who are 2 ½ years of age through Kindergarten age are eligible to enroll in the Pre-K program. Children who are 3 months through 2 ½ years are eligible for the Infant/Toddler program. The developmental needs of the child are also a consideration of program eligibility. Classrooms will fulfill the best developmental groups possible to meet the needs of all children involved and meet licensing guidelines.

A child must be two years and six months before September 1st OR three years old before October 15th to be eligible for the Pre-K. Children who start preschool before their third birthday will be on a trial basis to decide if the child is developmentally prepared for this experience. The teacher will make the decision with the parents about whether the child should continue or not after a minimum two–week observation period. If the decision is made that the child is not developmentally ready for preschool at this time, the child can participate in the Infant/Toddler program until the age of three.

A registration packet must be completed and returned prior to the student's first day in attendance. This registration packet information is to ensure that your child will get the very best care possible and satisfy the record-keeping requirement of state licensing guidelines.

All forms will be reviewed annually and may be updated at other times if required. If there are any changes in the information, please notify the director to update your records. Enrollment fees vary by season. Enrollment is open throughout the year when space is available.

Absences

Please notify your child's teacher when your child will not be attending preschool. It often will affect a teacher's plans when the number of children changes. It may also affect staff scheduling. Extended absences for illness or family plans can be discussed with the Director. Islesboro Preschool will not reimburse for absences.

Health Information

Each child is required to have on file a health statement, which includes up-to-date immunizations. Parents must provide an immunization record within the first 30 calendar days from the date his/her child entered the preschool program. This is a State Licensing requirement.

The preschool must have on file a signed *Permission for Health Care* form authorizing emergency care for each child. This would include emergency numbers for contacting a parent or guardian, another third party, or an authorized person. We stay in contact with the Islesboro Health Center.

Please keep your child home if there are symptoms of illness and notify the school staff if your child has a communicable disease. In the event a child contracts a communicable disease and exposes other children, a notice will be sent out informing parents and providing possible actions that may be taken for prevention. The ill child shall not return to preschool until the period of contagion has passed.

Islesboro Preschool reserves the right to deny admittance to a child who arrives in the preschool classroom noticeably ill with a rash or fever. If a child becomes ill while at the preschool, the parent or guardian listed on the *Permission for Health Care* form will be notified immediately and asked to pick up his/her child promptly.

A child attending preschool should be fever-free (without the aid of any medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.

Every effort is made to reduce the spread of illness by encouraging hand washing and other sanitary practices.

IPS reserves the right to close or suspend operations due to any localized or regional COVID outbreak or exposure. Families will be notified by the Director as needed.

Medications

Parents will provide any medications the child needs, including over-the-counter and prescription medicine. Parents need to fill out a medication form that gives permission to administer the medicine and details of its use by staff. All medicines must be in their original container with the pharmacist's or manufacturer's label, child's name, dosage instructions, current date, name of the medication, and times to be administered clearly written.

Tuition/Payment Procedures

For Islesboro Preschool to maintain the best program possible, it is essential that we receive payments on time. Please initial in each section below to confirm your understanding of IPS' tuition payment policy.

Tuition rates are determined annually, and invoices based on your child's enrollment will be emailed monthly. Payments are due **no later than 7 days past receipt** and can be submitted in any of the following ways:

- Paid online
- Mailed to: PO Box 88
- Placed in the tuition payment folder located outside the Director's office on the bulletin board

Payments may not be given to other staff members.

Payment Timeline & Late Fees

- All tuition payments must be made **no later than 7 days after the invoice is received**.
- If you need an extension, you **must contact the Director** before the 7-day deadline to make alternate arrangements.
- Failure to pay within 7 days, **without prior communication**, will result in you being asked to disenroll your student until the balance is paid in full.
- Any payments that go beyond 30 days past due are subject to a 5% late fee charge compounded daily.

Summer Program Payment

- To secure a spot in the **summer program**, tuition must be paid **in full** in advance. Enrollment is not guaranteed until full payment is received.

Additional Billing & Absences

- Monthly billing is calculated based on the number of days your student is signed up in advance.

- Any enrollment changes must be made **at least two weeks before** the start of the month.

- If you'd like to add a day, you must confirm availability **at least one week in advance**, and you will be billed at the standard daily rate on the next month's invoice.

- **No refunds** will be issued for absences after enrollment and payment have been confirmed for the month.

Arrivals and Departures

For the purpose of safety, children must always be left in the care of an adult when the child is arriving at and leaving the classroom. Children must never be left in the classroom without the teacher or teacher's aide present. Parents are typically asked to enter the room or playground area when picking up their child. Procedures may change under special circumstances directed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is required by state law that all parents or authorized people need to sign the child in and out each day. Staff provide a sign-in/out sheet at drop-off and pick-up times. No child will be released to a person unless previously authorized by the parent or guardian in the registration packet.

If someone different is picking up your child, a change can be made verbally for that day to a staff member. If someone unfamiliar with the staff will pick up your child, written

permission from the parent may be needed, and staff may ask the individual for identification.

If you have topics to discuss with the teacher, please request a meeting in advance. Pick-up and drop-off may not be the best time to discuss serious problems. If coverage of the classroom is available, another space for a conversation may be found; otherwise, a separate time to meet will be arranged.

Staff is onsite from Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm. Actual class operating hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Children should be dropped off between 8:30 - 9:00 am only, and pickup is between 2:30-3:00 and no later. For half days, pick-up is no later than 12:15 pm, and no drop-offs may occur in the afternoon.

If circumstances arise in which a parent cannot be at preschool by the assigned time, arrangements need to be made with the teacher. If a child is left beyond these defined limits with no arrangements made prior, an authorized person will be called, and a late fee penalty may be assessed.

Weather Cancellations

Islesboro Preschool typically follows the public school's emergency closing procedures but may deviate based on certain factors. The Director will notify families of any closures, late starts, or early dismissals.

Snack Information

The preschool will provide snacks for all students who are able to eat solid foods. Nutritious guidelines will be followed and any individual dietary concerns will be followed. Children will be encouraged to follow appropriate social etiquette surrounding food and group conversation. Children will be encouraged to try new foods, but it is the child's choice.

Birthdays are a special time in your child's life. We encourage celebrating that special day. Parents may bring a special snack to share with the class. Please consider healthy options.

Dress Requirements

Children are encouraged to wear play clothes and safe shoes while attending preschool. We like to have fun! Having fun involves outside play and lots of messy activities. During these times, we want the children to feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about the maintenance of their clothing. Flip-flops are

discouraged as a safety concern. The child's name should be clearly labeled on all outdoor clothing to ensure the return of all possessions and clothes. Outside activities are planned during the winter, so please plan for warm clothes, boots, hats, and mittens. An extra set of clothes should stay in your child's cubby for a change during the day, if necessary.

Field Trip Guidelines

Islesboro Preschool tries to vary the child's experiences by including field trips into our annual plans when it is safe to do so, considering any public health risks. On-island excursions are made within a walkable distance from the preschool. Strollers and safety ropes are utilized while traveling on the Main Road. An annual on-island permission slip is in the registration packet.

Parents may be asked to drive for field trips. The requirements for drivers are that they may carry only the number of children they can buckle into individual seat belts, and their insurance must be a minimum 100/of 300 coverage. All children must have an approved booster seat when on a preschool field trip unless the school bus is used.

Personal Toys

A child may bring a toy from home during the first two weeks of school in order to make the transition from home to school easier, but it is preferred that personal toys be left at home or in the car. It is appreciated when books, tapes, records, or other equipment are brought to be shared with the whole group. If toys are brought, please note that they may be put away. Little ones have difficulty sharing with others, especially if it is their own special toy. Please remember that toy guns and war toys are not permitted at the preschool or on the playground. A child may bring a special rest time, a sleepy toy, and toys may be brought on a special sharing day for show-and-tell activities.

Fundraising

In order to maintain a budget and keep tuition costs as low as possible, the preschool may run fundraising events throughout the calendar year. The chair of our Parent Fundraising Committee, a member of our Board of Directors, will typically initiate any fundraising event planning, and prospective fundraising ideas can be raised to them for consideration. It is the responsibility of the membership to help with these fundraising endeavors, and each family is required to help with all events. The Parent Fundraising chairperson will assist in answering any questions that may arise.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available through the Islesboro Community Fund. Applications are available at the preschool or at https://www.islesborocommunityfund.org/scholarship-funds.html and completed applications should be mailed directly to the ICF, P.O. Box 166, Islesboro, ME 04848.

Supplies

Donations help us keep costs down. If you are able to donate any supplies, please ask a staff member for a list of what is needed.

Scheduled Days and Holidays

Preschool typically begins after Labor Day and ends mid-June the following calendar year, with exact dates being determined annually. Specific days and times are determined at an annual meeting to set the schedule. The preschool commonly follows the Islesboro Central School's academic calendar for holidays and vacation weeks, although some exceptions may be made. An online calendar can be referenced on the preschool's website.

The Summer Program typically begins the last week in June and continues for approximately nine weeks to the end of August. The 4th of July holiday is observed and there is commonly a holiday closure on that day or the observance of that holiday.

Our program will educate and familiarize children with various holidays. Cultural and religious differences will be acknowledged and respected. If you have questions about activities surrounding a specific holiday, please ask the teacher about her plan.

Discipline

Giving positive verbal reinforcement encourages appropriate social behavior. Asking a child to stop and think about his/her inappropriate behavior encourages a child to develop empathy and self-control.

We maintain a positive discipline policy, which focuses on prevention, redirection, love, consistency, and firmness. We stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. The children have the rules explained frequently, so they are familiar with the guidelines.

Please keep in mind that there will be disagreements between children. Young children have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys, bite, etc. We will try to prevent problems, redirect when appropriate, discuss inappropriate behavior, encourage making amends with others, and sometimes withdraw privileges based on the

principle of “natural consequences”. The use of time-outs will be rare unless the child needs a brief cooling-off period.

If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above-mentioned techniques, we will hold a conference with the parents. Together, we will find a solution. You may be called to remove your child if the behavior prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children.

As required by licensing guidelines, under no circumstances will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name-calling, or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will be withheld from a child as a means of punishment.

Expulsion and Suspension

Islesboro Preschool reserves the right to disenroll/ suspend a child if it is in their best interest and/or the program. Cause for dismissal or suspension could include but is not limited to: Aggressive behavior, physical/ emotional harm to self or others, or incidents requiring a child to be sent home three times within a 3-month period. Behaviors that will result in being sent home are

1. Violence against an adult/ Teacher
    a. This includes: slapping, punching, pinching, and biting outside of the developmentally normal range.
2. Violence against another student
    a. This includes: slapping, punching, pinching, and biting outside of the developmentally normal range.
3. Inappropriate gestures and language
    a. Such as cursing, hateful speech, and inappropriate hand gestures
4. Destruction of Islesboro Preschool property
    a. Such as ripping books, breaking toys, and damage to the IPS building
5. Threatening students or staff

Any time a student is sent home for anything mentioned above, families and staff will be required to develop a collaborative action plan to prevent further incidents. Both parties must sign the report. Once we have reached the threshold for incidences, families and the director will have an official meeting to discuss the next steps.

Infants and Toddlers

Infants and Toddlers follow their own schedules. There is an outline of the day, but they are not capable of sitting still for a long circle time, may need a morning nap, etc.

Infants are fed on demand. Breastfeeding infants need to have an adequate supply stocked and properly labeled. Toddlers usually eat meals and snacks on a set meal schedule.

Snacks will be provided, but children need to bring their own lunches. Parents need to supply diapers, wipes, powders, ointments, bottles, bibs, teething or other personal objects, and a complete change of clothes.

A report will be prepared daily for each infant/toddler. It will include such things as time of feedings, what was eaten, amount eaten, time of diaper checks and results, times of naps, any medication given, and various comments about the child's day.

Toilet Training

When you feel your child is ready for toilet training, we ask that you begin teaching this at home. We will follow through and encourage your child in our care. The child must be showing signs of readiness. When a child is ready the process should go rather quickly. Switching between diapers and training pants can be confusing for the child. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract from using the potty when the urge hits. Therefore, we may continue to use pull-ups until your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom and can control his/her bladder or bowels for a few minutes.

During this time, we ask that your child be dressed in "user-friendly" clothes. Elastic waist pants or dresses are best. Try to avoid overalls, snaps, and tight clothing. Parents need to supply pull-ups, training pants, plus extra clothing, including socks.

Naps & Quiet Time

There will be a designated nap/rest time every day. All children must nap, rest, read, or play quietly during this period. Rest time gives children a much-needed break in their day. Without rest time, children can be argumentative, short-tempered with others, and not very happy by the end of the day. In accordance with DHHS Child Care Licensing Section 14(B)(2), "Children in attendance for more than four hours must have an opportunity for rest or relaxation of one hour or longer according to the age and needs of the Child."

Infants nap at various times, and their schedules will be accommodated. Between 12 months and 2 ½ years old, children tend to only need one nap a day. At this point, we may try a scheduled nap/rest period.

Special Needs

The Islesboro Preschool will make all reasonable modifications to our policies and practices to accommodate children with special needs unless doing so would be a fundamental alteration of our existing program. Each child will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine eligibility.

Medical Emergencies & Injuries

Minor bumps and scratches are inevitable, but we make every effort to keep children safe through supervision and safe practices. Minor injuries receive appropriate first aid. Depending on the nature of the injury, an Injury Report will be filled out and a copy is given to the parent to sign.

If an emergency illness or injury occurs, you will be contacted immediately, and the Islesboro Health Center will be called. Parents are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment.

Serious Injury and Child Death Reporting

If a student is injured resulting in a trip to an emergency medical center or dies in the care of Islesboro Preschool, it must be reported directly to our licenser, Christine Clayton. "Serious physical injuries," as referenced in this section, means an incident that results in an amputation, loss, or fracture of any body part or that necessitates immediate hospitalization or formal admission to the inpatient service of a hospital or clinic for care or treatment.

A copy of this form may be found in the director's office.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The staff of Islesboro Preschool will adhere to this policy as it applies to current and future students. We are dedicated to protecting and caring for our students while they are in our care.

If a parent or guardian suspects abuse or neglect from a staff member to their student they must:

a. all Child Protective Intake at 1-800-452-1999 or for deaf or hard of hearing individuals 711 (Maine Relay). To make a report
b. Report concern to the director

Behaviors that should be reported

- Physically harming a child
- Sexually abusing a child
- Exposing a child to substance abuse
- Failing to provide food, shelter, medical care, or clothing.
- Threatening to harm a child
- Living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions

Evacuation Plans & Fire Drills

We are required by state law to do a fire drill each month. We vary the time of day to help staff and children feel comfortable with the process. We practice two means of escape. The routes are posted by law in the entrance area. An evacuation crib with wheels is used to transport infants and non-walking toddlers. The yearly fire drill log can be found on the bulletin board in the front hallway.

In the event that we do need to evacuate our building, children will be taken to the Boardman Cottage for pickup.

Reporting Requirements

As a childcare facility, we have mandated reporters to the Department of Human Services if we feel a child is being abused or neglected. Always be sure to let the director or teacher know when you drop off your child if they have any unexplained cuts or bruises. All children who come to childcare with injuries have them logged into the child's file. If you ever feel that the Islesboro Preschool is not operating safely, please bring the matter to our attention. If you want to see the state licensing guidelines, there is a copy in the preschool room that you may borrow.

Indoor & Outdoor Play

We provide a variety of toys to play with. Toys may be rotated or temporarily taken out of use, so children do not get bored. Young children have less developed organizational skills and can get frustrated or upset when there are too many toys to choose from. We encourage children to select one or two toys at a time and to put items away before selecting something else.

We are outdoors every day that the weather permits. Make sure your child is properly dressed for the day. We do not go outside if the temperature is below 21 degrees (including wind chill), or above 90 degrees (including the heat index).

Otherwise, state law mandates that we take the children outside in accordance with DHHS Child Care Licensing Section 14(B)(3). If a parent feels their child is not well

enough to participate in outside activities, they should stay home until they are well enough to participate.

Confidentiality of Records

All children's records are only open to the teacher, director, and any parentally authorized person. Confidentiality papers acknowledging the responsibility of such information are signed by all staff.

Developmental Screening

Islesboro Preschool will work with the State of Maine, families/caregivers, and the students to provide access to developmental screening resources. Additional support in this area can be found here:
Https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/support-for-families/child-development

Please remember it is your preschool and your child's education. Be involved!

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This handbook will be reviewed annually. Notification of changes will be given to parents.