

Early Childhood Handbook 2021-22



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 Rishonim 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 & Curriculum Goals

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. Children are naturally wired for play and childhood is a very short time in their lives. At VTT, we are passionate about preserving play as a fundamental right of childhood.

We also aim for 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.

We are proud of the enrichment activities offered by specialist faculty. All students participate in music, movement and art once a week. JK students also benefit from participating in health and physical education classes twice a week.

Hours

Our half-day Rishonim program runs Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Our full-day Rishonim and JK programs run Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. with the option to pick up **no later than 4:20 p.m. Monday through Thursday**. Our Rishonim 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.**

On faculty meeting days (typically the first Wednesday of every month), parents must pick up their children at 3:20 p.m. The aftercare program is not offered on these faculty meeting days nor on days assigned for Parent-Teacher conferences (in November and March).

Drop Off & Pick Up

The early childhood team will be escorting your children to their classrooms daily. Please use the drive thru entrance at 26th Avenue to drop off your children between 8:15-8:45 a.m. If your child requires additional time to say goodbye, we suggest coming later to avoid creating a backlog of traffic. Our team is very skilled at transitioning children to school. We appreciate you entrusting us with the care of your children.

For those students leaving VTT at 3:20 p.m., pick up is at the 26th Avenue drive thru (with their siblings). If your child is staying for aftercare until 4:20 p.m., parents must email the teachers and the early childhood director **no later than 2:00 p.m.** to indicate as such. Students staying until 4:20 p.m. will be accompanied to the underground parkade for pick up. Failure to pick up on time will result in \$1 per minute late charges.

If your child is going to be picked up by anyone other than their primary caregivers or your regular schedule or contact

numbers change on a particular day, please email their teachers.

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

Many youngsters experience separation anxiety at some point in their early childhood 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.

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.

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. **When serving food to students, all COVID healthy and safety guidelines will be enforced.**

Communication

At VTT, we work in partnership with our parents to keep the lines of communication open. For concerns about your child, first speak with your classroom teachers. If additional support is required, please contact the Early Childhood Director.

Classroom and school newsletters containing pertinent information are sent by email. Please be sure to read all emails from VTT as they often contain important information.

Our early childhood educators also run closed classroom Instagram feeds. This is an excellent way to get an up close and personal view of your child's educational journey. Teachers will share the link to join when school begins and grandparents are welcome to follow as well.

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 attendance@talmudtorah.com as well as your classroom teachers for official notification of your child's absence.

Parent-teacher conferences take place twice a year. However, you do not have to wait for a conference if there is a concern – 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.

To arrange playdates or connect with other families, class lists with email addresses are shared at the beginning of the school year.

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.

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 your child changes 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.**

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 conflict peacefully while being available to guide them. For instance, children aged 3 and 4 are not developmentally equipped to "share." Thus, 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.

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.** For Rishonim full-day students: 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**. Please note that our faculty cannot be responsible for any missing toys.

Food & Snacks

Please ensure to send one snack if your child is in the half-day program or at enough snacks for full-day students, in addition to sending lunch and a labelled water bottle. All food must be either dairy or vegetarian and nut-free. Parents of full-day students have the option to order a kosher lunch online through our caterer, [The Perfect Bite](#). Students will receive challah on Shabbat and will enjoy special ritualistic foods associated with different Jewish holidays. We celebrate children's birthdays by baking a cake or serving cupcakes in class. COVID health and safety guidelines will be fully observed when preparing or serving food to the children.

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 any nut 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. If you plan on celebrating your child's birthday outside of VTT, please be as inclusive as possible. Out of consideration to all students, please avoid creating a situation where a few students are left out. We take pride in being a united school community. **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 & Mask Policy

VTT has a zero illness policy at this time. Parents are asked to keep their children home if they have any signs of illness. If a child appears sick at school, the parent will be asked to immediately pick up their child. VTT will work with the parents by using the tools available to determine the next appropriate course of action. Parents will be encouraged to contact their health care provider for guidance and to use [BC's Self Assessment Tool](#) or 8-1-1 to determine when it is safe for the child to return to school.



Early childhood students are not required to wear a mask as per the guidelines received from public health. Should parents wish to send a mask with their child, please know that teachers will do their best to remind students to wear it—but cannot enforce.

Contagious Illnesses

If a child has a suspected virus or has been diagnosed with a contagious illness or communicable disease, please notify the office immediately. To maintain the healthiest environment possible for all our students, **children should be kept home for 24 hours after all symptoms have passed and have been cleared by a physician to return to school.** If a student displays symptoms while at school, parents will be contacted and asked to take their child home.

While the global community continues to navigate the challenges of the COVID pandemic, any student with a cold, runny nose or cough must remain home until all symptoms have significantly improved and the child feels well and energetic enough to return to school. Please speak with your child and reinforce the importance of hand washing. Every classroom is equipped with hand sanitizer.

Fifth Disease is a viral illness often characterized first by fever and mild cold-like symptoms and later by bright red blotches on the face, torso, arms and legs. This virus can have serious implications for pregnant women and individuals with compromised immunity. If you suspect Fifth Disease, please do not send your child to school. Please consult with your family physician to determine when it is safe for your child to return to school.

It is appropriate for a child to return to school following an illness:

- After 24 hours of antibiotic therapy for strep throat, conjunctivitis or other contagious bacterial conditions.
- For those students suffering from viral conjunctivitis (pink eye), students should remain home until symptoms have subsided as antibiotic treatment does not diminish the condition and the risk of spreading is high. Please consult with a physician for advice on when it is safe for your child to return to school without compromising the health of others.
- After 24 hours without fever (and without medication). Many children with a nighttime fever will not have a fever in the morning, but it spikes again later in the day.
- After 48 hours (for early childhood) without vomiting, diarrhea or rash.
- Upon doctor's recommendation, documenting that a child is no longer infectious from a severe bacterial or viral illness.
- After 24 hours without fever (and without medication). Many children with a nighttime fever will not have a fever in the morning, but it spikes again later in the day.
- After 48 hours (for early childhood) without vomiting, diarrhea or rash.
- Upon doctor's recommendation, documenting that a child is no longer infectious from a severe bacterial or viral illness.

Sneezes and Diseases (Vancouver Coastal Health (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.
- If a child requires prescription medication to be administered during the school day, a consent form must first be completed. This form can be obtained by the classroom teachers or Early Childhood Director.
- 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.

