

# BunnyBears

**An intimate neighborhood preschool**



**Parents Handbook**

Dear Parents,

Welcome to BunnyBears Preschool – an intimate neighborhood preschool. Our nurturing learning environment is a place that helps to guide young children towards self-discovery. Children, families and teachers are a part of our community, where we learn from each other. We hope that our rich environment will be a comfortable place for children to learn, and develop their sense of self; furthermore, we hope that it will also be a place for families share their experiences and grow together.

We look forward to this special time!

### **The BunnyBears Philosophy**

We believe the early years of a child's life is the most important for growth and development; and the purpose of early education is to raise creative, thinking, loving children, who believe in themselves. Respectful, trusting and loving relationships between teachers and children, families and school are the key elements in creating the layout for early education.

As an Early Childhood Educators, we see all five selves in each child and acknowledge social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative growth. We strongly believe that supportive, respectful and child-focused environment encourages children to reach their maximum potential. The teacher's role is to support the environment and guide children toward self-discovery through art, music, literacy and dramatic play in small and large group activities. Although we agree that Early Childhood programs shouldn't be highly structured, we do believe that children need a simple routine in order to feel safe and secure in their environment.

Having studied in the field of Early Education, we are strong advocates for children's free play, which develops the creative aspect of the child's personality "the most effective kind of education is that child should play amongst lovely things" – Plato. We see creative dramatic play and constructive play as tool for children's language, social, emotional and cognitive development.

Each child is an individual and we value his/hers personal achievements instead of making comparisons between one child and another, because each child is very unique and special.

Our early education goals for young children are to teach them how to cooperate with others, form relationships, share, take turns, and use self-control. Learning this in early years can impact later social development and academic achievements.

For BunnyBears Preschool the most important part of being a teacher is being able to validate children's thoughts and feelings, acknowledge their actions and accomplishments.

### **BunnyBears Preschool values**

- We value the sense of community and belonging.
- We value creative self-expression.
- We value free uninterrupted child's play.
- We value intellectual development and social emotional growth.
- We value mutual respect between children, teachers and families.
- We value open communication.

- We value kindness and empathy.
- We acknowledge and value children's individual strengths and capabilities.
- We value environment that is created with children and for children.
- We value meaningful conversations and learning experiences.
- We value children's ideas that influence the curriculum.
- We value teachers' professional growth and learning.

### **Program**

BunnyBears is a child-centered rather than adult directed program. Our curriculum emerges from the children's interests and investigations.

We provide children with rich and stimulating, high quality environment. In building our environment we think about many creative spaces that motivate learning, develop relationships and promote a child's strong sense of self and security.

Although our program is not highly structured, we do believe that children need a routine in order to feel safe and secure.

In our program we encourage children to work together in small groups and value peer interactions that provide opportunities to learn and explore the environment. Teachers' observations and documentation allows us to better understand each child's learning styles and interests. It also helps us to provide children with the curriculum that is relevant and meaningful to children.

BunnyBears is an environmentally friendly school. Taking care of our own garden and school pets, recycling paper and trash will teach children to be respectful and caring towards their own environment. We ask children to be co-participants in the organization of our daily life in school (setting up the snack, cleaning up, etc.,) so we could all feel like a part of the BunnyBears community.

We work to create a literacy rich environment, which helps children make the connections between the spoken and the written word and that supports pre-reading skills according to each child's development and personal timeline. BunnyBears highly values and encourages self-expression through a wide variety of methods, including art media, storytelling, dancing, poetry, puppetry, etc.

Our outdoor art studio is rich with different kinds of paint and paper, collage and beading materials, clay, play dough, and much more. We encourage children to work on individual as well as group and long term projects. Art studio is a place where children are supported to be free in their own expression of art: finger painting, body painting, footstep pattern making, clay sculpture building, etc

All the teachers at BunnyBears School are well educated and experienced in early childhood education. We are committed to continuing our own growth and development as individuals and teachers by reading professional journals, attending workshops and conferences and supporting each other as colleagues.

### **Hours and Days**

BunnyBears School is open Monday through Friday 7:00am to 6pm. We serve children ages 2 to Kindergarten. (Please see the attached sheet for tuition fees and program options.)

We observe most of the Santee – San Diego School District Holidays, and we close for two weeks for Winter Break, one week in Spring and one week in Summer. You will be

notified in advance of any other unexpected dates of closure. Holiday list is provided to families.

### **Fees**

There is a \$150 non-refundable application fee. Application forms for enrollment packet are posted on BunnyBears website [www.bunnybears.com](http://www.bunnybears.com). The packet includes California childcare licensing forms as well as BunnyBears Admissions Agreement, Parent's rights LIC995, Children's rights LIC613 and Identification and Emergency Information LIC700.

Tuition will be due the first day of each month paid by check or cash or money transfer on Brightwheel app. *If tuition is not paid by the fifth of the month*, a late charge of \$5.00 per day shall apply. Checks returned by the bank for insufficient funds will incur a \$20.00 fee. If more than 2 checks are returned, you will be required to pay your tuition in cash. *While enrolled, monthly payment is required whether your child is in attendance or not, including summer months.* There is no refund policy, and we require at least one full calendar month advanced notice should you decide to discontinue enrollment for any reason (please see Admissions agreement). The Center reserves the right to terminate enrollment for non-payment of fees.

Annual School supply and improvement fee of \$200 is due in September.

### **Arrival, Departure and First days**

Our arrivals are scattered and everyone arrives between 7:00a.m and 9:15a.m. However, the latest time the child can be brought to school is 10:30a.m.

The school's entry is gated and the gate code is given to families when starting the school.

**Sign in/Sign out procedures.** Each child must be signed in upon arrival at school. Next to the cubbies we have a sign in sheet, where *you must write your full name legibly in ink next to your child's name (no initials) every day.* At the pick-up time, each child has to be *signed out – with parent's (or authorized person's) full name signed and the time when the child is picked up.* This also has to be done at the check in station through BrightWheel app.

Please communicate any special instructions, medications, play-dates, etc. to your teacher or director. Your child may be picked up and signed out by either parent or an authorized adult (the names of whom you must put down in our Enrollment Application LIC 700). We will not allow your child to be taken from school by someone other than yourself or an authorized adult unless you personally notify us in advance. To avoid undue stress, be prompt in picking up your child. If you must be late for any reason, please phone us so we can tell your child. *There will be a \$5.00 charge for every five minutes or part thereof if your child is not picked up on time.*

The first days /weeks at school are a time of adjustment. We recognize that each child's adjustment period will vary depending on his or her age, temperament and prior experience. For some children it will be their first experience away from Mom and Dad and this might be frightening and overwhelming to a child. We ask that that you discuss separation at home in advance and discuss where family members will be while the child is in school. Perhaps even a visit to Mom and Dad's office will help the child to visualize where Mom and Dad are during the day. You are also welcome to discuss your child's needs with us before they start so that we may work together to ease the transition. We will also schedule

a play day or visit for both you and your child before he or she begins attending the program. This will give your child an opportunity to get acquainted with us and gain trust for open communication. We will also ask for first couple of days to stay with your child in our school setting, observe his/hers reactions to the new environment and don't rush the good-byes.

**Snack and Lunch** – a mid-morning snack is served daily with two food groups being represented. Fresh fruit or vegetables, crackers, rice cakes, bagels, waffles, cereal, etc. are typical. Our morning snack is available from 9:45a.m Children use ceramic cups, plates and silver when eating inside and paper plates and cups when eating outside. Teachers are always ready to help children but for the most part children are highly encouraged to be independent and help themselves. Afternoon snack is served at 3:30pm. Children are involved in preparing and serving the snack.

We are *peanut free school* and any peanut products (peanut butter, peanut bars, peanut sauce, etc.) are not allowed. As a substitute many families use sun butter, almond butter and other bread spreads.

We encourage you to pack healthy, nutritious lunches. Lunch may include protein source, fruits and vegetables, a drink or water, *but not candy, sweets or gum*. Because we expect parents to provide children with healthy options in their lunches, the children are responsible for what and how much they eat. They may choose the order in which they eat their foods. For example, if you do not want your child to only eat cookies or chips, then we suggest that you don't send them or send a very small amount, so that they will still be hungry for the rest of their lunch. We will not force children to eat or use food as reward or punishment. Packing and bringing your own lunch is very comforting for children as it connects school to home and home to school. We encourage you to pack your lunch in a special lunchbox which your child will carry to school, and I love you note from parents in the lunch box can make a child feel very special. Lunch boxes will be stored in a designated area (next to the cubbies). We encourage to keep an ice pack to keep the lunch items cool; refrigerator won't be available for storing lunch items. Please label the lunch boxes and toper wear. *Lunch items that have to be warmed up must be kept in separate toper wear.*

**Nap/Rest Time** - in accordance to Childcare Licensing guidelines, Tittle 22, 101230 "*All children shall be given an opportunity to nap or rest without distraction or disturbance from other activities at the center.* (1) A napping space and a cot or mat shall be available for each child under the age of five. (2) Centers that serve children in half-day programs are not required to schedule napping periods or have napping equipment for such children." At BunnyBears nap/rest time goes from 12:45 – 2:00pm. You need to keep small blanket, mat sheet and small pillow in your child's cubby. At the end of each week we ask you to take blankets and sheets to wash them and bring them back to school on Monday. We will provide each child with special cot (mat). Children don't have to sleep, but they will be asked to stay in their cots/on their mats and have quiet time. If children are not asleep after 45 min of rest, they stay on their beds reading books. If you wish the teachers to wake up your child from his/her nap time sooner, we will ask you to put it in writing. Soft music and comforting back rub by a teacher usually puts children in a nice sleep. Children may bring a special cuddly toy, blanket or book that they like to read before rest time. *Please label all items from home.*

**Termination Policy** - We reserve the right to terminate a child for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay
- Routinely late picking up your child
- Failure to complete the required forms
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Failure of child to adjust to the center after a reasonable amount of time
- Parents physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
- Enrolled child putting other children in care in danger, physical or verbal abuse.
- Our inability to meet the child's needs
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
- Serious illness of child

**Biting/Hitting Policy** – if the child happens to bite other child or teacher, we inform both parties and work with the child making sure that the biting stops. We closely work with families and teachers, however, if we fail to modify the behavior, we will terminate child's enrollment after 3 biting incidents. If the child is repeatedly hitting and/or hurting other children in any other way termination will be in effect as well.

**Damaging school furniture/materials** – we ask children to take ownership of their environment by taking care of toys, materials and furniture. Children are seen as active participants in keeping their work/play space organized and in order. We ask children to be respectful and caring. If the child is intentionally breaking school items we will communicate it with families and ask to replace the item. If the behavior pattern continues we will put termination policy in effect.

We appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating, and will give the same courtesy in return. *Parents are required to give one month notice should you decide to discontinue enrollment for any reason. In lieu of notice, half the monthly tuition shall be paid.*

We will give two weeks' notice of termination for which full tuition is due, whether or not the child is in attendance. The provider reserves the right to give written notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well-being of the provider or other children in attendance.

### **General Information**

The following information, policies and procedures reflect both our sincere concern for your child's well-being and the various cities, county and state regulations with which we must comply:

**Parent/Teacher Conferencing** – at least one formal conference will be scheduled during the year to discuss your child's progress and development. This is usually held in spring. Daily communication between families and teachers are important and valuable. Please let us know if there are any changes in your child's life.

**Daily Communication** – our teachers make themselves available in the mornings and in the afternoons. We understand that some mornings might be busy for parents and teachers and we ask families to send us updates and messages through Brighwheel app., our teachers will do the same. However, personal interactions are extremely important and irreplaceable, our teachers will always make time to catch up and share stories about your child's progress.

Please feel free to share any suggestions or address concerns to the center director in person or via e-mail. In person or phone call meetings can and will also be arranged if/when needed.

**Parent Involvement** – parents, teachers and children are all essential parts of our community. We believe that the partnership between family and school enhances your child's educational experience. Parents are encouraged to volunteer and participate in our parties, special occasions, and book reading. We will have two school workdays throughout the year, when parents can assist teachers with improvements to our school environment. Workdays generally take place on Saturdays 9am – 12pm. The workdays are invaluable in creating and maintaining a safe and exciting environment for children. Picnics with children and Parents Nights out will be held upon your requests. We are open to your ideas of how you can be a part of our community.

**Visiting** – please feel free to visit the school at any time, but remember that teacher's first responsibility is to the children. Please note that visits are not allowed during quiet/nap time.

**Physical Examinations** – the state requires that before your child begins school, he or she must have a medical examination. *The child also needs to have all the required immunization shots.*

If your child has any bruising, bumps or injuries that occurred at home please inform your teachers when you bring your child to school.

**Immunizations** – *All children are required to have up to date immunization records on file before starting school.* Effective January 1, 2016, per Senate Bill 277, there are no exceptions for personal belief. As required by law, BunnyBears Preschool reports the immunization status of all children enrolled to the San Diego County Department of Health. Medical assessment/Pediatricians report form LIC 701 has to be signed by the pediatrician, along with immunization records and TB Test notice and Child's preadmission health history -parent's report LIC 702

**Sick Children** – children often get sick when starting group environment; especially when it is first time being in a group setting. It is all a part of building your child's immunity and your children will get more fit as they get older.

*If your child shows signs of an illness, please be sure to keep him/her at home for the well-being of both your child and the other children.* The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding if your child should attend school. Your child should not attend if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature over 100 degrees orally.
- Any undiagnosed rash.
- Diarrhea – runny, watery, or bloody stools.
- Vomiting – two or more times in a 24 – hour period or once with other symptoms.
- Runny cloudy nose.
- Sore throat with fever and swollen glands.
- Severe coughing – child gets red or blue in face or makes a high – pitched whooping sound after coughing.

- Pink eye and or eye discharge – thick mucus or pus draining from the eye.
- Yellowish skin or eyes.
- Unusual irritability or lethargy.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Mouth sores.

*For any of the above symptoms children will be allowed to return to school after 24 hours of being symptom free.* Children sent home from school with vomiting, diarrhea or fever must be free of these symptoms for a full 24 hours before returning to school. For certain highly contagious viruses and other infectious disease (for example hand mouth and foot disease; pink eye; flue; pneumonia) *doctor's note will be required to come back to school.* Our teachers check each child daily for symptoms of colds, fatigue and contagious disease. *You will be called to pick up your child if he or she shows signs of illness.* In the event where you cannot be reached, we will notify a person listed on your emergency contact list. Please, keep this information up-to-date.

Families will be informed about any serious and contagious outbreaks at school.

BunnyBears also has a policy regarding head lice “Nits-No”. In case of head lice outbreak your child can come back to school only if he/she is nits free. Teachers will be checking children coming to school and if they see any nits or head lice, your child will be sent back home immediately with his parent or guardian.

**Medication** – if medication needs to be administered to your child, please leave written instructions with your classroom teacher. California State Law specifies the following restrictions on administering medications at school.

-Prescription Medicines must be in its original prescription bottle, clearly labeled with child's and doctor's names and dosage printed by the pharmacy. Leave medicine with the teacher.

-Medicine will be administered only with present doctor's note, no over the counter medication will be administered to your child.

- Never send medicine in a child's lunch box.

**Allergies** – Please inform school staff and teachers about your child's severe or/and mild allergies. If your child has an epi pen prescribed by doctor, there should be one kept at school at all times with your child's name. Epi pens are kept and stored out of children's reach. The school staff is trained to use epi pen in case of emergency.

**Accidents and Emergencies** – Please keep all emergency numbers up to date for our records. Be sure to notify us of a change in work or home numbers and update the identification and emergency information form, LIC700. Our staff is trained to handle every day bumps and scrapes. Should more action be required, parents or emergency contacts will be called. In case of a life threatening injury, staff will also call emergency medical services (911). For this reason, every child will have a “Consent for Medical Treatment” form on file.

**Birthdays** – your child's birthday is a special day. We enjoy being a part of your child's birthday celebration. You are welcome to bring a treat to share. We appreciate knowing ahead of time if you plan on bringing a special snack so we can coordinate the details with you. We also encourage to make your child's day special not only by bringing treats, but more so, by coming and reading your child's favorite story at story time; or perhaps telling the story about when he or she was little.

**Clothing** - while at school your child participates in active, busy and messy play and work. *Please dress your child in clothes that can be easily washed and possibly stained.* Children should concentrate on their play, not on keeping clean. *You should*



*also provide clothes that are simple and free of complicated fastenings (belts, suspenders, overall etc.), so the child can assert their independence by using the toiled without any help. All shoes should be closed toed to eliminate stubbed toes and be safe for running and climbing. We suggest that you send sweater or jacket every day or keep and extra one in your child cubby. At the beginning of the school year bring a spare set of old cloths to be kept at school in case a spill or a mishap occurs. Include pants, shirt, underwear, socks and please replace them as needed. Clothes can be easily labeled with a permanent laundry marker. Always label jackets and sweaters.*

**Cubbies** – each child has his/her own cubby where he/she can keep his/her personal belongings, a set of extra clothes and place their jackets once they get warm. Children’s bedding, pillows and blankets are also stored inside the cubbies. Please keep in mind that the space inside the cubbies is limited. *We recommend you bring compact pillow and blanket for your child.* At the end of each week, cubbies should be cleaned, sheets taken home for laundry and extra clothing items that collected during the week taken home.

**Potty Learning** – children don’t have to be potty trained prior to enrollment. This developmental milestone is a personal and individual matter which can’t be rushed. We are always looking for potty readiness signs and help children and families achieve success.

We ask families to provide diapers (or pull ups) for nap time for their children. When children are learning to go on a toilet teachers remind children and take them to the bathroom every hour; they keep a log to communicate with other staff members and parents.

There are times when children transition to wearing underwear with very few “accidents” *and times when we have to move back to wearing pull ups and continue with mastering the skill while wearing pull ups.* The signs that your child is not ready to wear underwear: refusal to sit on a toilet when asked, spoiling underwear every day for a week.

*Please note that while your child can be very successful at home, he/she might still have difficulties at school.* We ask you to keep up the good work at home and allow your child to get comfortable with using the toilet in the comfort of his/her home. Potty learning might not be as successful at school because of a busy play schedule, distractions and comfort level at school (some children look for privacy to be more relaxed and comfortable) that using a toilet might not be as successful at school in the beginning. Whatever the case is we want to reassure you that all children succeed at their own pace with patience, support and encouragement. Keeping open communication with your classroom teacher and trusting her observation from school is important and helpful for all parties.

**Field Trips** – we don’t anticipate many field trips throughout the year. Whenever planning a field trip we allow ourselves plenty of time to give everyone notice and create the best adult/child ratios with an active parent’s participation and involvement in planning and facilitating the field trip.

**Toys from Home** – *please do not bring toys to school.* Children who bring toys from home will be asked to keep them in their cubbies. If your child needs a blanket, stuffed animal or other transitional object in order to feel more secure, they are welcome to bring that to school. *Action figures, toy guns and other objects which encourage violence in play are strictly prohibited.*

**Discipline Policies** As stated in section 101323.1 in the Manual of Policies and Procedures of the Child Care Centers, Division 12: Any form of discipline or punishment which violates a child's person rights, shall not be permitted.

A child's personal rights are outlined in Section 101223:

1. To be accorded dignity in his/her personal relationships with staff and other persons.
2. To be accorded safe, healthful and comfortable accommodations, furnishings and equipment to meet his/hers needs.
3. To be free from corporal or unusual punishment, infliction of pain, or other actions of a punitive nature, including, but not limited to: interference with the daily living functions, including eating, sleeping or toileting; or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication or aids to physical functioning.
4. To be informed, and to have his/her authorized representative informed, by the licensee of the law regarding complaints including, but not limited to, information on confidentiality and the address and telephone number of the Department's complaint unit.

At BunnyBears we treat children with respect and we operate on the premise that young children are never "bad". Inappropriate behavior that requires discipline is usually the result of the child's level of development. We believe in working with the child on their development level and helping the child to understand that the behavior is bad and not the child. We always take extra steps to help a child understand the concept of rules and consequences.

We do not use "time out" at BunnyBears instead we try to give the child the tools to work through problems on their own. If a child needs to be removed from a situation they will sit down with a teacher who will help him/her to calm down and to figure out solutions to the problem. Each child is unique in its own way and teachers respect and acknowledge children's feelings.

"Say Sorry" statement is rephrased as "See/Ask what can you do to make your friend feel better" at BunnyBears. It allows children to take care of their friends with more empathy that just saying "Sorry" and give a friend a hug, go get a tissue, an ice pack; dust their pants, bring their cuddly toy, sit together and read a book...

At BunnyBears we strive to create an environment that will enhance positive behavior in children, allowing children to feel a part of BunnyBears Family where we all take care of each other. We help children to gain confidence to solve problems on their own, encourage them to speak up and listen to others. When a child has the self-esteem to talk about his/her feelings and the respect for others, to listen to their peers, a lot of discipline problems get eliminated.

To inform parents about concerning repetitive behavior patterns meetings will be conducted, where child's teacher and director will meet with child's parents to discuss action plan and/or involvement of third parties (behavior therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist). The time line will be set for close observations and a meeting to revisit the concerns will be scheduled. BunnyBears Preschool reserve the right to terminate a child, please see Termination Policy.

**Emergency plan** – we have on hand supplies for 48 hours should a disaster occur. In a Ziploc bag with your child's extra clothes, please include a personal note and a family photo that will comfort your child in the event of an emergency. In case we need to relocate, a note will be posted indicating our relocation site and parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

**Acknowledgment:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent or legal guardian of, \_\_\_\_\_,  
acknowledge that I have read and understand the terms and conditions of my child's  
enrollment at BunnyBears preschool.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent or legal guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date