



# Parent Handbook

## Information and Policies

# Welcome!!!

Welcome to Brilliant Minds Montessori Centre! Our vision is to “Build a Brighter Future” for your child. We do this each day by encouraging the cognitive, physical, emotional, social and creative growth of the children at our centres.

The purpose of this information package is to provide you with information about our program and centre policies. Please contact us for any questions or concerns that you may have. We are pleased to help you make an informed decision about your child’s care.

## Our School

Brilliant Minds Montessori Centre is fully licensed by the Ministry of Education. Since our inception in 2005 we have been dedicated to providing the highest quality of childcare and Montessori education. We have three locations in Mississauga which offer programs for children between 18 months and 6 years. Our centres are designed to be safe, nurturing and comfortable educational settings.

All our staff members hold Montessori and/or ECE diplomas and are trained to understand your child’s development. Every child in our care receives age-appropriate opportunities to develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. Our staff members are also fully trained in CPR and First Aid, to ensure the safety of your child.

## Our Offering

- Montessori education and academics
- French, Art, Music, Swimming, Library Visits
- Playground and daily outdoor activities
- Hot catered meals and two snacks
- Two local field trips per year
- Two concerts per year
- Monthly newsletters and daily activity plans

## Our Environment

At Brilliant Minds Montessori, we blend Montessori education, academics, extracurricular activities and play. This provides children with a holistic learning experience in a fun and stimulating environment.

The Montessori philosophy proposes that children should be surrounded by an environment that develops their essential learning habits. As such, children are given the opportunity to explore various areas of study, participate in independent learning, and develop their self-esteem and leadership by engaging in age-appropriate activities. Our program therefore develops the entire personality and not just the intellect.

## Our Goals

At Brilliant Minds Montessori, we have a variety of goals which are aligned with the Montessori philosophy. Our goals are:

- To help the children develop to their full potential by allowing them to follow their inner need to learn and while doing so, respecting their personality (extrovert, introvert etc). We ensure our environment is stimulating and non-competitive.
  - Our indoor environment is designed to promote a variety of spontaneous and planned group or individual activities.
  - Our outdoor environment promotes healthy development and gross motor skills.
- To foster independence and encourage initiative. This will enhance the rapid development of the child's self-confidence.
- To encourage the child to work at their own pace and for the mere satisfaction of completing an activity, and not for any reward or threat of punishment.
- To customize educational plans for each so that teachers act as "Guides" or facilitators.
- To respect and develop the child's intellect and personality in order to enhance self-discipline and good work ethic for the future.
- To teach the children to take pride in social etiquette which will help them integrate in their daily social environments.

## Our Curriculum

Our curriculum at Brilliant Minds Montessori blends Montessori education and academics. We use a holistic approach which provides age appropriate activities for each child. We follow five categories of learning:

### 1. **Practical Life Exercises:**

These Montessori exercises help to develop control and coordination of movement, an awareness of the environment, orderly thought patterns, work habits and responsibility. The direct aim of these exercises is to improve and refine the fine motor skills of the hand and arm muscles in preparation for writing skills. These exercises indirectly develop independence and self-confidence which will help children master their daily life activities later on in life.

## 2. Sensorial Exercises:

These Montessori exercises aid the development and refinement of the senses by providing organized opportunities for contact with the environment. This moves the child from concrete understanding to the ability to think abstractly and logically.

## 3. Language:

Language is taught phonetically by using materials which increase vocabulary and improve visual perception. Once a child has mastered the alphabet, we can begin to compose and build words and finally achieve reading and writing skills. Storytelling, songs, and engaging in discussion are other ways that the child is able to develop their language skills. The goal of all this is to enable the children to master their reading and writing skills and also to build a solid foundation for grammar and comprehension.

## 4. Mathematics:

Children are introduced to basic math functions through concrete materials. Gradually, complex computations are introduced in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Math is introduced using games and other creative methods so that the child learns math concepts without realizing it.

## 5. Cultural Activities:

Cultural subjects encompass History, Geography and Social Sciences which are taught by the discussion of monthly themes, arts and crafts, and visual aids to promote learning. This builds self-awareness and introduces the children to the community and environment around them.

## Example of a Typical Day

07:30-08:00am	Free play
08:00-09:00am	Outdoor play
09:00-09:20am	Circle Time
09:20-09:35am	Washroom
09:35-10:00am	Snack
10:00-11:15am	Montessori/Academics
11:15-11:30am	Circle Time and Washroom
11:30-12:00pm	Lunch
12:00-02:00pm	Nap
02:00-02:10pm	Washroom
02:10-03:15pm	Montessori/Academics
03:15-03:30pm	Snack
03:30-04:30pm	Outdoor play
04:30-06:00pm	Story and free play

# Our Policies

## Policies Listed

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## School Timings and Dates

- The centres are open Monday to Friday, 7:30am to 6:00pm (5:30pm at Bristol).
- The school year is September to June. There is a summer program at Mississauga Valley.
- The centres are closed on all statutory holidays, Christmas Break (2 weeks), and March Break (1 Week).
- The centres may close due to special circumstances such as severe weather conditions. On a day when there is bad weather, call the school to listen to the message on the answering machine to see whether it is a 'snow day'. We follow the peel public schools with regards to snow days.

## Arrival and Departure

- Upon arrival, please stay until a staff member has assumed responsibility for the supervision of your child. It is advisable to inform the staff of any health symptoms or changes in routine or behaviour that may affect your child's participation in the program.
- When picking up your child, please ensure that a staff member is aware of your departure.
- Children will only be released to people that are acknowledged on the child release form.
- Any adult not recognized by our staff will be asked to provide identification even if they say their name is on the child release form.
- There is a late fee of \$1.00 per minute after the closing time. The late fee is payable directly to the member of staff on duty, and must be paid within the same week.

## Supervision Policy

- Children will be supervised at all times according to staffing ratios outlined by the Ministry of Education.
- Staff members will all have clear criminal records and up-to-date immunizations. This applies to all volunteers and placement students.
- Volunteers and placement students will not to be counted in staffing ratios. Their role will be to assist other staff members.
- The supervising staff will ensure that under no circumstance will direct unsupervised access be granted to anyone who is not an employee of Brilliant Minds Montessori Centre.

## External Agencies Policy

- Parental consent will be obtained to authorize any third party support agencies to work with a child.
- An example of a third party agency is Erin Oaks.

## Food Policy

- Children are served a morning snack and an afternoon snack, as well as a hot nutritious lunch. All meals are served with fruit and milk/fruit juice. All food arrives daily to our centres by a registered catering company.
- Parents are requested not to send any food to school as some children have food allergies.
- All our centres are **Nut Free Environments**.
- The Supervisor will inform all food handlers and providers if there are any children with allergies and food restrictions.

## Illness Policy

- A documented medical form is required for each child before admission into the school. Thereafter, parents are required to keep their child's immunizations up-to-date.
- A quick check is done on each child upon arrival to the centre to note down any symptoms of ill health, such as bruises etc. Any symptoms that develop during the day are also noted down and communicated to parents.
- When children are at the school, it is expected that they are able to participate in the group schedule. Thus, if your child becomes ill during the day to a point where it is interfering with their participation, their emergency contacts will be informed and the child will have to be picked up from school.
- Children showing signs of illness (e.g. fever, excessive fatigue, vomiting, diarrhoea, and discharge from the eyes, etc.) must remain at home for their own well-being and that of others. Children may not return to school until they are clear of symptoms for 48 hours.
- Communicable or prolonged illnesses must be reported immediately to the school Supervisor. A physician's note may be required, stating that your child is free from infection, before they will be permitted to return to the school.

## Medication Policy

- When a parent brings in prescription or non-prescription drug or medication, a Medication Authorization Form must be completed and signed by the parent and staff in charge.
- All medication must:
  - be in the original container
  - have the child's full name
  - have the name of the drug
  - have the date of purchase and the expiry date
  - have instructions for storage
  - have clear instructions for daily dosages required
- Staff members retain the right to refuse to administer medication if the necessary documentation is not complete.
- Medication will be administered by one staff member and witnessed by another.
- Any medication administration will be documented in the child's file.
- It is the parents' responsibility to ensure any medication is not expired.
- If medical treatment, including anesthetic, is required due to circumstances such as accidents or sudden illness, it may be administered by a medical professional. Parents will always be contacted first for consent, unless it is an emergency situation.
- Any medical expenses that are incurred are the responsibility of the parents.

## **Anaphylaxis Policy**

- Some children are allergic to nuts and their reaction to nuts would be anaphylaxis, which is a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction, involving several body systems: skin, upper & lower respiratory, gastro-intestinal, and cardiovascular.
- To avoid any such allergic reactions, our centres are all nut free environments.
- Children who have nut allergies must keep an Epi-Pen on site with the Supervisor. The medication policy stated above must be followed with Epi-Pens, just as with any other medication.

## **Emergency Situations**

- In the case of an emergency situation, such as a fire or power outage, children in the centre will be evacuated by the staff members to a predetermined evacuation site. A comprehensive evacuation drill is practiced by staff members and children once a month.
- Parents of the involved children will be notified as soon as possible. For this reason it is imperative that emergency contact information is kept up to date.

## **Serious Occurrence**

- In the case of a serious occurrence, such as abuse or an accident that requires medical attention etc, the parents of the involved children will be called immediately and the Ministry of Education will be notified within 24 hours. Depending on the incident, an investigation may be conducted.
- All parents will be notified of the serious occurrence on the next business day by posting a description of the incident on the parent bulletin board. No children will be identified on this posting in an effort to maintain the confidentiality of the persons involved.
- Staff members have a legal obligation to report abuse or mistreatment of children.

## **Field Trips**

- We plan 2 field trips per year and have been to a variety of different places such as Downey's Farm.
- Information and permission slips will be provided in advance of any field trip. Completed permission slips are a requirement for going on a field trip.
- There will be a minimal cost for field trips.
- If space permits, parents are welcome to join the group during the field trip.
- Toddlers must be accompanied by one parent.

## **Swimming**

- Children 2.5 years and older will participate in a swimming program which will be taught by trained instructors. There will always be lifeguards in the pool area.
- Teachers will accompany the children to and from the pool area, and will be available to assist the children to change their clothes.
- Proper swimming attire and a towel must be provided.
- Parent authorization must be obtained.

## **Photography**

- If photos are taken of your child during field trips, concerts, in class etc, they will only be used for posting on the school bulletin boards.
- The school will always request parents' authorization before using photos for any other purpose, such as marketing. Authorization is required before any picture is used.
- Parents have the right to refuse their child being photographed. If so, please note this on your application form during enrolment.

## **Payment**

- New enrolments are charged a registration fee of \$100.00, payable upon enrolment.
- A deposit is required upon the start date of the child. This deposit is equivalent to 50% of the fees that will be paid monthly.
- Post-dated cheques must be provided on the start date. They should always be dated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month, and are required for the entire school year, or for the remainder of the school year if the child starts during the school year.
- A \$10.00 per day charge will be incurred for late cheques.
- A \$50.00 charge will be incurred for any bounced cheque.
- Regular fees are due regardless of sick days, statutory holidays, Christmas Break and March Break.

## **Withdrawal**

- A one month notice must be given to withdraw your child from our program. If this notice is not given, the deposit amount paid at the start of the year will not be refunded.
- If vacations are taken during the school year, 50% of the regular fees must still be paid for the time that the child is away. If this is not done, the deposit will be used towards this amount and another deposit will have to be paid when the child returns to school.

## **Behaviour Management**

- Children appear to learn best when they are given reasonable limits and freedom to choose. As such, at Brilliant Minds Montessori, discipline is planned to assist the child to become self-disciplined through the use of positive reinforcement, the explanation of choices and logical consequences.
- The school does not permit: corporal punishment, derogatory comments, confinement, or deprivation.

## **Communication**

- A variety of opportunities are offered to ensure communication between parents and staff members:
  - Daily verbal communication is sometimes possible during drop off and pick up.
  - You are welcome to call the Supervisor at any time during school hours.
  - Formal meetings are held twice a year to discuss report cards and other issues.
  - Monthly newsletters and calendars are provided to share information and describe planned activities for the month.
  - Parents are required to update personal information to ensure the ease of contact in case of an emergency.
  - Parents are required to notify the Supervisor as soon as possible if their child will be absent from school.

*Please contact us for more information.*

**Bristol**

310 Bristol Road East  
Mississauga, ON L4Z3V5  
905-501 0436  
br@brilliantmindsmontessori.com

**Mississauga Valley**

1275 Mississauga Valley Blvd  
Mississauga, ON L5A3R8  
905-276 4144  
mv@brilliantmindsmontessori.com

**River Grove**

5800 Rivergrove Road  
Mississauga, ON L5M4R8  
905-542 9823  
rg@brilliantmindsmontessori.com