



Bowen Island
Montessori School
It's in our Nature to Learn

Family Handbook 2016-2017

"Education should no longer be centred on imparting knowledge; it must take a new path, seeking release of human potential."

-Maria Montessori

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Overview

The Bowen Island Montessori School (BIMS) program offers children 2½ to 6 years of age a diverse cultural and educational experience based on the Montessori philosophy and curriculum, supplemented by additional current and innovative educational practices. BIMS offers a secular and worldly view of cultural celebrations but does not advocate any specific system of beliefs.

Our goal is to provide an enriched environment where children are encouraged to reach their full social, emotional, physical, and intellectual potential through a hands-on learning experience.

Our school's peaceful, collaborative atmosphere promotes autonomy, critical thinking, and strong character building, while nurturing each child's natural love of learning.

Program Goals

- ❖ To provide a caring, safe, and nurturing social environment where all children are respected and learn to be respectful of themselves, their peers, teachers, community, the school environment and the world around them
- ❖ To provide children with the opportunity to learn, work and play in large and small groups, as well as individually
- ❖ To observe each child's readiness for and interest in learning new skills and to offer activities that are not only interesting and challenging, but are also set up to ensure a successful experience
- ❖ To provide an experience and understanding of caring for our world and all living things
- ❖ To provide a wide variety of carefully designed Montessori materials that bring children into contact with practical and concrete means of exploring and mastering a rich curriculum

Teachers and Staff

Our teachers create a nurturing atmosphere and carefully prepare the environment to meet the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of your children. Although BIMS is a Montessori program at heart, we seek and hire staff based upon our vision: BIMS is a progressive and integrated early childhood educational program, embracing current practises and ideals. We believe this open and flexible approach helps us to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families. At BIMS, we blend, mix and match philosophies to create a fun-filled, interesting and dynamic place for the children of Bowen Island to spend time. Our staff are fully qualified and trained, both Montessori and ECE so our program is a well-balanced combination of philosophies.

Helen Davenport has been with in the Montessori community for more than 20 years; 9 years here at BIMS. She has her ECE certification, is Montessori trained plus is a BC Certified Montessori elementary educator. Helen started working with preschool aged children, then supported a group of parents to start an independent Montessori school then taught elementary aged children for 9 years before joining the BIMS team 8 years ago.

Brynn Matthews joins our teaching team in the fall of 2016. Her first experience here at BIMS was as a parent, subsequently, Brynn has been in our classroom as a substitute teacher on numerous occasions over the years. Brynn has much experience working with children and is currently working towards her ECE certification.

Childcare Programs

The programs offered at BIMS include a morning and afternoon program which offers children 2½ to 6 years of age the opportunity to explore and learn within an environment carefully prepared to meet their developmental needs. A group care program is also offered, providing families with up to 8 hours of care per day. We continue to embrace the Montessori style program and curriculum throughout the day, while incorporating other diverse activities based in creative and dramatic play, arts and crafts, music and dance.

Our classroom is designed to help children become independent and to develop confidence, concentration, and mindfulness of themselves, each other and their environment. The mixed age grouping offers younger children the chance to learn from older children, while the older children gain confidence by helping their younger peers and becoming leaders in the class. Montessori materials are designed to intrigue children and encourage them to explore math, science, geography, and language. Art, music and movement are also an integral part of everyday life at BIMS and children are encouraged to express themselves creatively in many ways.

Licensing

The group care programs are licensed for children aged 2 ½ to 6 years. We adhere to the strict licensing requirements of Vancouver Coastal Health and the B.C. Community Care Licensing Branch, which regularly monitor our policies and procedures.

Morning classes	Monday through Thursday, 8:45 am to 11:45 am
Afternoon classes	Monday through Thursday, 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm
All day Care	Monday through Thursday 8:45 am to 3:30 pm

Extended Childcare Program Times

Early morning care	Monday through Thursday, 8:00 am to 8:45 am
Afternoon extended care	Monday through Thursday, 3:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Drop-In Care

BIMS will take currently enrolled children on a drop-in basis when space permits. **We request at least 48 hours advance notice to confirm availability.** Once verbally confirmed, payment will be invoiced for whether the child attends or not as a space has been reserved.

Drop-in fees will be invoiced in full at the end of the month. Please note that families will be invoiced for the total hour(s) of care, regardless of the time of drop-off or pick-up.

Please note that all sessions include time outdoors each day, weather permitting. This time outdoors is part of our daily program and is required by licensing. Please be sure your child arrives prepared to play outside for up to 30 minutes each day.

School Calendar

BIMS follows the West Vancouver School Board calendar and recognizes statutory holidays. Professional Development Days are announced in advance.

Monday September 1	Labour Day (closed)
Thursday, November 24	Parent/teacher meetings, no care provided
Monday, December 19	Winter break begins
Monday, January 2	Preschool back in session
Monday, February 13	Family Day (closed)
Monday, March 13	Spring break begins
Monday March 27	Preschool back in session
Thursday, May 4	Parent/teacher meetings, no care provided
Thursday, June 22	Last day of regular care hours
Friday, June 23	Family Fun Day no care provided

Statutory holidays for the school term are as follows.

Thanksgiving	Monday, October 10
Remembrance Day	Tuesday, November 11
Good Friday	Friday, April 14
Easter Monday	Monday, April 17
Victoria Day	Monday, May 22

You will be informed about parent/teacher meetings, statutory holiday closures, class trips and special events through our newsletters. Please mark these dates on your calendar.

In the event of the facility's closure due to inclement weather, sustained power failure, or extremely poor road and weather conditions, a 'phone tree' is initiated to inform families on a daily basis of the school's operational status. Generally, this communication occurs at approximately 7:30 am each morning of the closure. If a power outage occurs during the preschool or childcare session, or if the weather becomes such that it causes a program closure, parents will be phoned and asked to pick up their children immediately. Please ensure that we have your correct contact information plus an emergency contact on island.

Attendance/Pick-Up and Drop-Off

*Parents are asked to notify BIMS when a child will be absent for more than **3 days**. If your child has a communicable disease, please report this to us as soon as possible as we must inform Vancouver Coastal Health of any outbreaks of communicable diseases within our community.*

The daily transition from home to BIMS is an integral part of your child's day. Greeting the teacher is the first transition of the day for your child. To make this transition as smooth as possible, we ask that special good-byes are done **before** each child greets the teacher. Each child can then greet the teacher and make his/her way to the cubbies to hang up coats and change shoes. This allows the child to build independence and form special bonds with new friends as they enter the classroom.

It is imperative that arrival and dismissal times be closely adhered to as the time before is vital for preparation to ensure a smooth and productive day for your children. Please pick up your child promptly by 11:45 am, 3:30 pm or 4:00 pm, as children become anxious if you are not there at the end of their day. If you are going to be late, or someone else is picking up your child, please let us know in writing.

Children should arrive no earlier than 8:40 am or 12:25 pm. If necessary, contact us the day before and arrangements can be made to drop your child off a few minutes earlier.

Your child must be personally released to a staff member and you must inform a staff member of your child's departure. No child will be allowed to leave the school premises with an unauthorized person or any individual under the age of 13 years.

Gradual Entry

A child's first experience of group activity is important, so the first few weeks of September are directed towards setting a positive tone and an atmosphere of fun in the classroom. Time is spent going over the limits and guidelines, introducing children to their new classroom, and getting to know each other.

We have a gradual entry or phase-in period to ensure that each child begins the year positively. The first days of September begin with all children returning to BIMS from the previous year. After these first few days, new children (2 or 3 each day) are gradually introduced to our childcare programs. This enables the teachers to spend time bonding with each new child; any fear or anxieties a child may have are lessened when this special kind of attention is given. The gradual entry gently brings a child through a variety of adjustments and changes associated with starting preschool or group care. The phase-in period is crucial in developing a secure, predictable, and loving atmosphere, which leads to an enjoyable and productive year for all.

Child/Parent Orientation Day

Each August, an Open House is held to allow children and parents to meet with the Montessori teachers and become familiar with our childcare environment before the school term begins. It is an important day, not just for our new children, but also for families joining the BIMS community.

Parent Night

It is essential for all families to understand what we are doing at BIMS. A Parent Night is held during the first two months of the preschool year to provide parents with an overview of the Montessori Method and how their child's days will unfold. Please make the time to come; it is of special importance for new families to BIMS. Parents will be notified about this meeting via newsletters, email and our website.

Communications

Philosophy

Communication is important to us. Our goal as a community organization is to foster open, honest, and direct communication among all those involved with BIMS. This builds a foundation of mutual trust, faith, and support that allows us to work effectively together in the best interests of our children.

We hold three fundamental principles of positive communication paramount.

1. Our mutual goal in building and maintaining parent/teacher relationships is to be open and honest, direct, sensitive and understanding in a professional manner. The parent/teacher relationship balances the needs of home and BIMS, while maintaining the child's well-being and welfare as a priority.
2. Parent/teacher communication is built upon mutual respect, cooperation and acknowledgment of one another's perspectives through a commitment to shared expectations
3. The development of mutual trust is an essential part of parents and teachers working as a team

Practicalities

At BIMS we have an open-door policy for communication between families and staff. If you have any concerns, we encourage you to discuss them with the Administrator and/or teaching staff. Privacy is of the utmost importance. As professionals, we feel it is inappropriate to discuss concerns pertaining to any child's behaviour or development in a child's presence. Sensitive issues should be discussed privately between parents and teachers. Appointments for personal meetings can easily be arranged before or after class. Alternatively, since the teachers can be contacted at the school, a phone call may suffice. If there are areas you feel we could improve upon or would like to let us know of something specific you or your child has enjoyed please feel free to contact or Administrator.

As teachers of young children, we find it advantageous to communicate with parents on several different levels.

- Newsletters are emailed and filed regularly throughout the year. They contain important information about upcoming events, themes and celebrations, so check your communication file folder in the classroom regularly. We do our best to make sure that students who do not have email access receive a paper copy. Please contact your teacher if you would prefer to receive newsletters on paper rather than via email.
- Teachers regularly post important notices on the school windows. Please watch for them at pick-up/drop-off times.

- Check the corkboard in the cubby area regularly for important information that you may have missed.
- Email messages will be sent periodically during the school year to let families know what is happening at BIMS and how your child is doing so please be sure we have your correct and current email address.
- Parent workshops are held throughout the year. These sessions cover child development, as well as the Montessori materials used and curriculum. They provide valuable information on the developmental needs of a child and activities to support learning at home.
- Home phone calls and email messages happen periodically during the school year to let families know how their child is doing.
- In order to meet the constantly changing needs of each child, the teachers greatly appreciate hearing about any significant changes taking place within the home. Situations that may affect your child's sense of security, level of attachment, and general well-being include:
 - a parent/caregiver being away for a period of time
 - a new person in the family
 - hospitalization
 - death of a family member or pet
 - illness of a parent or sibling
 - accident
 - house guest
 - separation/divorce
 - change of caregiver
 - change of address
 - change in routine, e.g. a new job

Parent/Teacher Meetings

Parent/teacher meetings are scheduled twice a year, usually in December and May, to discuss your child's experiences and learning. If you would like to meet with teachers at other times to discuss your child's progress, please make a specific appointment.

Bursary

Every year, through fundraising efforts and grants, we are fortunate to be able to allocate funds for families that may require bursaries. Full bursary is not available at this time but we strive to accommodate so please contact our Administrator for more information.

Payment Options

BIMS is working on going paperless! If you could help us with that by setting up preauthorized payments or e-transfers it would be greatly appreciated. In the off chance payment cannot be made, please let us know prior to an NSF notification. If we receive two consecutive months of NSF payments, care will be suspended until payment options can be arranged.

Classroom Tours

Class tours are scheduled twice per year on Fridays; one in the month of November and another in April. This gives parents the opportunity to participate with and to see their child interacting in a Montessori learning environment and its many activities. These opportunities offer families for to fully experience preschool from your child's perspective and may be offered a lesson from their child on how things work here at BIMS.

Field Trips

A Parent's Agreement and Permission form is provided for your authorization should you wish your child to participate in field trips. We may ask parent drivers who transport students to carry a \$5 million minimum liability limit on their automobile insurance. Field trip drivers must provide a photocopy of their automobile insurance prior to their first school trip.

We may go on several field trips during the year, usually during the spring term when the weather is more favourable and predictable. If a field trip or special event is planned for a day that is not your child's scheduled school day, he/she may be invited to join us.

Volunteer Responsibilities

BIMS relies on the involvement and generosity of its parent body, as well as the Board of Directors, staff, and general community. BIMS is not-for-profit, unlike other Montessori schools. Childcare fees and grants fund only part of the costs of operating the BIMS programs.

Accordingly, parents, staff and Board members are invited to participate in community, educational and fundraising events throughout the year. We encourage all parents to support and participate in these efforts, and to share their time, expertise, materials and skills to enrich the resources available to BIMS children.

With this in mind, the board of directors of BIMS has felt the need to change the number of hours needed from each family in order to meet all the needs of the program. We have discussed this matter for months and have identified that there is a need for two types of support: classroom and fundraising. At this time, the new policy has not been developed but will be announced at BIMS' first parent meeting, scheduled for Thursday, September 19th at 7 pm.

Fundraising events occur throughout the year. Please be on the lookout for ways to help support our recycling efforts. Over the last few years, a significant amount of our operating budget came from volunteer efforts.

Snacks

Please provide a small healthy snack for your child to eat each day. Please ensure that food is ready to eat, and that foods such as grapes and carrots are sliced lengthwise to reduce the risk of choking. *Popcorn should be avoided, as it is a choking hazard.* Please pack snacks in a small, easy to open, reusable container, which can be kept in his/her cubby until your child is ready. Because of allergies and different eating philosophies, the children will not be sharing food with their peers. ***Please do not send candy.***

Each child will be invited to provide a special birthday snack on the school day closest to his/her actual birthday. Children who have a birthday during holidays will be given a special day of celebration before the holiday; watch for more details about one week before.

Lunches

Nutrition is important to us at BIMS. We urge families to provide a wide range of healthy foods to sustain children's ever-growing bodies and minds. Please provide a simple, healthy lunch made up of fresh, good quality, nutritionally balanced foods if your child attends full-day group care.

BIMS incorporates experiences and activities to support your child in learning about good eating habits and nutrition. We ask families to support our efforts by providing healthy choices at snack and lunch times. **Our time together is not the time to 'experiment' with new foods or try to get your child to eat food, which is not his/her favourite.** We break for lunch between 11:45 am and 12:30 pm; however, children are given ample time to meet their needs.

If we have a child enrolled in BIMS who has serious food allergies, including nut or fruit allergies, we may ask other families not to pack these specific food(s) for their own children. We ask for community support in creating and maintaining a safe environment for all children.

Slippers and Clothes

If you feel your child may require a change of clothing, please pack a set of clean, dry clothes in a bag and make sure they are well labelled with your child's name. If your child wears training pants, please include a spare pair or two just in case.

Indoors

Please bring a pair of soft, skid-proof indoor shoes that can stay at the school for the year. Overstuffed novelty slippers may be cute, but they are cumbersome and sometimes distracting for the children. Small, close fitting slippers are preferable. Please put your child's name in them. We prefer that all children remove their outside shoes when they come in. Our floors often get wet; indoor shoes will keep your child's feet warm and dry.

Outdoors

On rainy days your child needs to have boots and a muddy-buddy or rain suit with hood. In the winter, your child needs boots, a toque, warm and waterproof outerwear, and mittens. In the spring and summer, your child needs a sunhat, and sunscreen should be applied before coming to school. All children will go outside to play every day, weather permitting, so please have your child prepared to have fun outside.

Birthdays

We encourage our families to donate a book or simple rhythm instrument to the classroom on their child's birthday. In doing so, each child can share a favourite story or reference book with the class and enrich the learning environment at the same time. This gift honours the child's growth and development as a member of our community.

Most children like to celebrate their birthday with the class, and we welcome this. We try to schedule your child's birthday snack day close to his/her birthday. Please bring a small treat for that day (not too much sugar to be respectful of our community's diverse nutritional beliefs). If in doubt, please ask us for suggestions. We celebrate with a special birthday circle, sing, "The

Earth Goes Around the Sun”, and talk about the birthday child’s growth and development through the years. Please bring photos of your child at various ages. Children love to show everyone how they have grown over the years.

Please do not hand out birthday party invitations out at BIMS unless you are inviting all the children present. If you need mailing addresses, we would be happy to provide them so that children will not feel that they are left out.

Health Policy

We ask parents to please keep their child at home when he/she has:

- a temperature of 39 °C or higher
- a bad cough or sore throat
- vomiting
- skin or scalp infections
- a rash
- diarrhea
- profuse discharge from the nose
- eye discharge or pink-eye (conjunctivitis)
- a contagious disease
- head lice
- scabies

If you are unsure about your child’s condition, please take him/her to the doctor prior to bringing him/her to BIMS. Please advise us immediately about contagious conditions such as lice, chicken pox, scabies, etc. If your child is not well enough to be outside, please keep him/her at home.

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, we will immediately seek proper care for a sick or injured child. In the event of an emergency, the child’s individual health and emergency instructions on file are consulted and those individuals listed are contacted immediately. Please ensure that the people listed on your medical form or emergency consent card live on-island and can be easily reached; another BIMS parent is a good choice.

If necessary, the sick or injured child will be transported by ambulance. All important health and emergency data, including parental consent, will accompany the child so that treatment can be given promptly in the absence of a parent.

Minor scratches, cuts and bruises will be treated using general first aid by our certified staff on-site. Parents will be notified of these injuries upon their arrival at pick-up time.

BIMS is required to have a complete health history and emergency contact information on file for each child enrolled. It is **imperative** that parents keep the emergency contact information up-to-date.

Medication

BIMS will administer medication to your child only if all medication is in the original container with your child’s name, proper instructions, information regarding signs of allergic reaction and the doctor’s name and telephone number are provided. Please take the time to go over this information with us to ensure that the instructions are clearly followed.

Fire, Earthquake, and Emergency Procedures

We value the safety and care of our children and regularly practice safety drills to ensure preparedness for an earthquake, fire or other emergency. Your children will be trained in how to respond, where to line up, and how to make their way as a group to the designated meeting spot (the green in Artisan Square).

If an earthquake should happen during care hours, there is the possibility that children will need to stay overnight at the school. We have provided each student with a mini-earthquake kit, which is kept at the school in case of such an emergency. If you would like to personalize the kit for your child, please feel free to do so with a family photograph, stuffy and/or a loving note from home.

Guiding and Caring

BIMS follows the 'Guidance and Discipline Manual' published by the B.C. Ministry of Health, which is available upon request to parents after registration.

We avoid many behavioural problems by providing an age-appropriate program that is stimulating and meets the needs and interests of the children. Specifically, we use many different strategies to enable children to choose appropriate behaviour.

- We give children the words to use in order to solve problems: for example, "Tell Angela you don't like it when she pushes in front of you". Use of words allows children to work out their conflicts in an appropriate way
- We use reminders, repetition, and good example to help children remember what is socially acceptable
- We respect the child's need to be heard, acknowledge feelings and always allow time for the child to respond
- We recognize and respond to positive behaviour and sometimes ignore negative attitudes
- We use redirection of activities and sometimes limit use of equipment, if necessary
- Very occasionally 'time away' from the other children may be used for short periods if a child appears out of control. The use of consequences is sometimes appropriate; the child will be given a choice, "Do you wish to be with us and cooperate or do you choose to sit nearby until you are ready to cooperate?"
- We use scanning techniques to monitor behaviour and intervene when necessary
- We establish clear, consistent limits so that the child understands what is expected
- We focus on the behaviour rather than the child. For example, "The pencils belong in their holder John", instead of "You haven't cleaned up John, your pencils are all over the floor"

We also adhere to Section 52 of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Child Care Licensing Regulation.

*(1) A licensee must ensure that a child, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, is **not** subjected to any of the following:*

- shoving, hitting or shaking by an employee or another child, or confinement or physical restraint by another child

- confinement or physical restraint by an employee, except as authorized in a childcare's plan if the care plan includes instructions respecting behavioural guidance
- harsh, belittling, or degrading treatment by an employee or another child, whether verbal, emotional, or physical, that could humiliate the child or undermine the child's self-respect
- spanking or any other form of corporal punishment
- separation, without supervision by a responsible adult, from other children
- as a form of punishment, deprivation of meals, snacks, rest or necessary use of a toilet

*(2) A licensee must ensure that a child is **not**, while under the care or supervision of the licensee, subjected to emotional abuse, physical abuse, or neglect as those terms are defined in Schedule H of the Act.*

Supporting Independence in the Washroom

- Children arrive at BIMS with different levels of development in the area of self-care. If it becomes necessary for us to help a child in the washroom, whenever possible we talk through the steps required rather than offering physical assistance.
- Our support and encouragement is given at all times in a gentle, calm and reassuring manner.
- If your child is experiencing difficulty or anxiety with a particular aspect in the washroom, please let us know so that we can be as supportive as possible.

To encourage independence in this very important area of development, please help your child choose clothes that are easy to remove; for example, elastic-waisted pants rather than suspenders, belts or overalls.

We maintain a supply of clean underwear and pants if a change of clothing is necessary. However, you may wish to provide a set of your child's own clothes to be kept in his/her cubby.

In the greatest interest of your child, if he/she needs more help and emotional comfort than we can offer at the time, we will contact you to come and assist. Please remember that the teachers are caring for a group of up to 16 children. Our objective is to support the personal needs of each individual child, while also attending to the needs of the group as a whole.

Toilet training requires a combined effort from the family and the childcare centre. Please speak with us to set up a plan, if necessary. The child being able to announce that he/she needs to use the washroom, sleep through naps with a dry diaper and show genuine interest in the process often determines readiness. Our diapering procedure follows all the licensing guidelines to ensure emotional and physical safety standards. During your child's time with us, we will provide gentle reminders and routine in order to support his/her development.

Montessori Information

For further information about Montessori methods, please refer to any of the links or books listed below.

Books

Standing, E.M. (1957) **Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work**

- covers Maria Montessori's life, how she developed Montessori education, the method's theoretical basis, and the worldwide growth of the Montessori movement

Polk Lillard, P. (1996) **Montessori Today**

Polk Lillard, P. (1972) **Montessori: A Modern Approach**

Montessori, M. (1949) **The Absorbent Mind**

- discusses the development of infants and young children from birth to 3 years of age
- gives a clear explanation of the basis of Montessori theory and method

Montessori, M. (1973) **From Childhood to Adolescence**

- discusses the development and education of the child from age 7 years through adolescence
- includes Dr Montessori's thoughts on university education

Kramer, R. (1976) **Maria Montessori: A Biography**

Websites

Bowen Island Montessori School: www.bowenmontessori.ca

Check BIMS out on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bowenmontessori/> Bowen Island Montessori School

North American Montessori Teachers Association: www.montessori-namta.org