



PARENT HANDBOOK 2021-2022

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Introduction

The Hinesburg Nursery School (HNS) is an independent, non-profit, state licensed parent cooperative preschool for children ages three to five. We are STARS-rated and participate as an Early Learning Partner with school districts that our students reside in. Our teaching staff consists of two professional early childhood educators, and our program accommodates a maximum of 12 students daily.

History

In 1972 a group of local Hinesburg families came together to create the United Nursery School as a space for more organized play and learning for their children. In 1978 the school was incorporated, and moved from its original home at the United Church of Hinesburg to The Alliance Church of Hinesburg. The school name was officially changed to the Hinesburg Nursery School in March of 1985. In 1990 the school moved to its current location at the Hinesburg Masonic Lodge, located next to the Hinesburg Community School, in the heart of the village.

Why the Cooperative Approach?

We recognize that parents are a child's most important teacher and as a member of a parent cooperative preschool, you and your family are given the opportunity to help shape your child's early learning. A parent cooperative does require more involvement than a traditional preschool because the families share in the responsibility for the school's operation and administration. As a result of giving this extra time a family can experience a deeper connection to their child's first school experience, and a strong sense of community and support shared with the teachers and other families at HNS.

Philosophy

Our program is designed to help children recognize themselves as individuals and foster high self-esteem. We encourage curiosity, imagination, and exploration of the world while teaching socialization skills. Sharing, taking turns, cooperating and following directions are some of the basic skills that our program emphasizes. The structure of our program provides the children with security and continuity in an inviting, play-oriented atmosphere.

Curriculum

We have a child-centered, play-oriented approach to learning, with developmentally appropriate activities. General objectives of the program include:

- **Self Esteem and Independence**
 - By offering choices we give children the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. Our “free-play” time in particular allows children to determine when and what they would like to play. When a child is confident, comfortable, and encouraged, they develop positive self-esteem and self-respect.
- **Artistic Expression**
 - We encourage children to explore their own creativity because we recognize the importance of process over a final product.
- **Interaction and Cooperation**
 - We have a comfortable, safe environment allowing for the development of children’s social skills for diverse peer and adult relations. These include the development of:
 - Listening and language skills
 - Group participation
 - Following directions, rules and routines
 - Peer conflict resolution
 - Respecting others
- **Discovery and Expression**
 - We foster learning through questioning, observation and hands-on manipulation.
- **Early Literacy and Numeracy Skills**
 - Skills such as counting, rhyming, patterning and letter recognition are a regular part of our activities.

Classroom Schedule

A typical day begins with several open activity stations in the classroom, giving children a way to ease into the day and spend some focused time. Children can choose to work in journals, play with manipulative toys and puzzles, or explore a theme-related activity (e.g. look at bones or shells on the discovery table).

Circle time involves the children in a group activity. The weekly ongoing theme (e.g., transportation, colors, seasons, authors, ocean life, animal tracks, etc.) is presented and discussed. Activities during circle time may include conversations, stories, poems, exercises, songs, counting, fingerplays and movement.

At snack time, children can practice independence and fine motor skills by opening items they have brought in to eat. The class sits together at tables and enjoys snack time together.

During free time, children may select an activity of interest and change activities as they choose. Activity centers may include: art projects and painting; manipulative toys and puzzles; sand table; dramatic play and dress up corner; story corner; wooden blocks, lego blocks, marble run and other building toys; play dough; games. Children can choose to take part in special projects during free time. Projects are usually related to the weekly theme and include exploring different artistic techniques and mediums, cooking, creating thematic murals, conducting experiments, planting seeds and using tools.

Clean up meeting is where tasks are assigned to each child in order to help return the classroom to order before the end of the day.

Outdoor play rounds out a typical day with free play on the playground. The class may enjoy more time outside, depending on the weather and current projects or themes being explored. In the winter, children can use the sledding hill at the back of the school. Warmer days may find the class engaged in water exploration or mud kitchen play.

Classroom Procedures

Attendance

For absences, late arrivals or early pickups, please call the school at 802-482-3827 and leave a message for the teachers. If you know this information in advance, please notify the teachers directly or send an email to the Director.

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures (see COVID Policy for updated procedures)

School is open from 8:15am to 12pm. The doors to the classroom will be locked once class is in session.

When dropping off and picking up, you must sign your child in and out.

a. Drop-off

Drop off is from 8:15 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Our teachers may use the morning to prepare for the day, so please do not drop your child off earlier than 8:15am. Upon arrival, your child should put away their belongings in their cubby or on a hook within the playground, depending on where the day will begin. If you have a younger sibling with you during drop-off or pick-up, please make sure to monitor them closely while inside the classroom or on the playground. Please assist your child with hand washing and bathroom needs before beginning the school day.

b. Pick-up

Parents are expected to be prompt when picking up their child(ren) at 12:00pm. Pick-up will usually take place on the playground. On days when children are not on the playground at pick-up, please wait until 12pm before entering the classroom. Once the parent is present for pick-up, they assume supervision of

the child in the classroom or on the playground (e.g., keeping an eye on the child's whereabouts, making sure the child is being safe and considerate, etc.).

Belongings

Each child will be assigned a cubby on the first day of school for storage of personal items. Please bring in an extra set of clothing to be left at the school. These clothes should be replaced when necessary to reflect the changing seasons. Transitional objects such as blankets or other special items to help a child deal with separation may be brought in, if necessary. Please do not send your child with toys, electronic devices or other non-essential items to school.

Clothing Suggestions

Clothing for school should be the work/play type. We plan to have fun and explore with hands-on activities, which may mean getting messy. Please have your child dress appropriately for the weather, as outside play is planned daily. As much as possible, please make sure clothing and outerwear are easy for your child to put on/change themselves.

Indoor shoes are recommended in the classroom. It is also recommended that the shoes have a rubber sole; this is an important consideration as the weather gets colder so that kids are prepared to leave the building quickly in the event of an evacuation.

Parent/ Teacher Conferences & Teacher Communication

Teachers will email a weekly thematic plan, including books and songs that will be utilized during the week. These plans are flexible and are meant to give parents an idea of what is being learned and a starting point for parent-child conversation about what your child is doing in school.

Conferences are scheduled twice a year. Teachers may provide written assessments at that time. Generally, assessments cover topics having to do with social and emotional development, peer interaction and basic language and numeracy skills.

Parent/teacher communication is highly encouraged throughout the year. Please feel free to contact the teachers outside of school hours if you have questions or concerns or if you would like more information about how your child is doing. It may not always be easy to have a conversation with one of the teachers during pick-up or drop-off.

Behavior Management

Discussions and conversations are our first approach to dealing with challenging behavior. For incidents that involve peer conflict we encourage peer problem-solving and resolution. If these approaches prove ineffective, the child will be removed from the situation for a period deemed appropriate by the teachers. Parents are kept informed as problems arise, and as always, are encouraged to discuss any behavioral issues with the teachers. The teachers may require periodic parent teacher conferences to ensure the desired behavior is evolving.

At HNS, we are sensitive to the impulsive and sometimes physical nature of the preschooler. However, it is our primary responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing environment for all of our students. If a child's behavior continues to be an obstacle to their full participation in the program, or continually prevents others from safe participation as well, the teachers will seek to collaborate with families to make focused observations, seek more information, problem solve, or provide additional resources/referrals. If the safety of the child and/or his or her peers is compromised, the child's parent may be called to pick up the child. Our goal is to fully meet every child's needs!

Parent Participation

Parent participation is integral to sustaining our school's high standards for providing the best possible preschool experience for our children. Parents are involved in all aspects of the school including administration, maintenance and finance. In addition to the items outlined below, every family signs up for jobs to support the school.

In the Classroom

Arrival and Departure

Please be respectful of arrival and departure time as outlined in the classroom section.

Substitute Teachers

A list of approved, paid substitutes will be utilized throughout the year when one of the teachers is out. Parents who wish to substitute teach (alongside a teacher) will be asked to meet the Vermont State requirements, which include but are not limited to a background check, specific state training, and First Aid & CPR. A child (or younger sibling) who does not normally attend school on that day may not come with the parent substitute.

Confidentiality

All adults in the cooperative are expected to keep information about other children and families confidential. It is especially important not to discuss children or their behavior in front of children or with other adults. If you have a concern, please speak to a teacher privately.

Snacks

Each family will provide their child with a mid-morning snack. We encourage families to offer healthy food choices, such as fresh fruits and vegetables; cheese and crackers, or other age appropriate options. Please send your child with a water bottle, which can be refilled at school as needed.

If there are specific food allergies in a class, all families will receive notification and guidance on that prior to school starting.

On Field Trips

All families share in the duty of providing transportation and acting as chaperones for field trips. All necessary car seats/booster seats must be provided by each family for any scheduled trip. Parents are not allowed to “drop in” on field trip days but can usually meet the class at the field trip location.

Building and Grounds

Mandatory Work Days

Each family must participate in several mandatory maintenance and cleaning days held during the school year. If a family cannot help on a scheduled cleaning day, they are obligated to help in other ways as determined by the Maintenance Coordinator (e.g. completing a specific project that does not need to be done on a cleaning day).

Exterior

All parents should assist with keeping the walkways in the front and back of the school cleared of snow and ice.

Meetings & Communication

Board Meetings

All parents are welcome to attend board meetings. These meetings are held monthly, and minutes will be emailed to parents. The Board Members may vote on policies, procedures, and tuition changes, as needed.

Parent Meetings

A representative from each family is required to attend all parent meetings during the school year, which are held at the beginning and end of the school year and prior to any major fundraising events.

Fundraising committees may call additional meetings, as needed.

Communication Methods

Email is the primary source of communication for all school related information and activities. It is the responsibility of each family to provide a current email address to ensure school communications are received in a timely manner.

HNS maintains a private Facebook group and Instagram account for families to see photos of day-to-day classroom events, field trips, etc. These groups are monitored closely and no identifying information is ever included in these posts. If a family has a specific concern about their child’s privacy, a Board Member should be notified.

Print communications are limited to keep operating costs low. If you prefer telephone calls or print communication, please notify a member of the Board.

Parent Jobs

Each family will sign up for jobs during the first parent meeting of the school year. Parent jobs are divided into categories based on the expected time commitment, frequency, and duration of a job. Certain jobs require a greater time commitment (e.g. Board positions), while others require a smaller or more defined time commitment (Event Chair, Field Trip Coordinator, Art Assistant, Surface Cleaner, etc.). The method of job selection and sign-up can vary year to year, and families are asked to sign up for the number of jobs based on how many children they have enrolled for that school year.

All families are required to participate in major fundraising events (e.g. Big Truck Day), regardless of their “assigned” job.

Fundraising

Fundraising is essential to the continued financial stability and well-being of the school. Fundraising allows us to reduce our need to utilize resources set aside for capital expenditures and unforeseen expenses, and to provide scholarships as needed. Our fundraising events have also become essential in allowing HNS to meet the requirements set forth by the State of Vermont to maintain our 4-STAR rating.

Participating in annual fundraising events such as the Silent Auction and Big Truck Day gives parents the opportunity to connect with other HNS families and foster a greater sense of community within our school and beyond.

Winter Online Auction

This event is a spin off on the Waffle Breakfast and Silent Auction event that was hosted by HNS for almost two decades. In 2017, HNS made a decision to discontinue the breakfast and moved to an online auction format in hopes of reaching a wider audience and lessening the parent volunteer workload associated with the breakfast/auction event. With the help of numerous HNS parent volunteers we had a successful launch of the online auction in February 2018, and it has continued to be a successful fundraiser.

Big Truck Day

Trucks of all shapes and sizes are available for kids to climb on and enjoy; the event takes place in the lower parking lot of the Hinesburg Community School. People pay a fee to enter, and have the option to pay for a BBQ lunch or bake sale items; entertainment usually includes a musical performance, face painting, and more. This has become our biggest fundraiser, and it generates great publicity for the school. Parents help secure trucks, donations/sponsorships for the food and entertainment and help with set-up, running the event and clean-up.

Board of Directors

Hinesburg Nursery School is a non-profit corporation and must comply with the laws of the State of Vermont regarding such status. At the Annual Meeting in the spring, parents elect HNS Cooperative members to be Directors/Officers of the cooperative for the following year. Directors/officers are required to carry out their responsibilities as outlined in the HNS By-Laws and specific job descriptions contained in the Policy and Procedure Handbook. Directors/Officers (including the President) are limited to serving two consecutive years in the same position, the exception being the position of treasurer due to the skilled nature of this position. They are permitted, however, to remain on the board beyond the two years provided it is within the capacity of a newly elected office. Individuals should ideally have served at least one year on the board prior to running for the office of President.

The Officer positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Fundraising Chair, Maintenance Coordinator, and Public Relations Chair shall be elected, with other positions being added as the Board deems necessary. A position of “Member-at-Large” may be elected to keep the board to an odd number of Directors.

Operating Procedures

Health & Safety

Hand Washing

Hands will be washed with soap and water before snacks, after toileting, and upon entering the school.

Toileting Procedures

Children must be toilet trained to attend school. HNS licensing does not allow teachers to assist with diapers.

Playground Rules

A teacher always supervises the playground. The following outlines the playground rules.

- Children may not open the gate unless the teacher gives permission or an adult is with them.
- Children are allowed to leave the playground with a teacher’s permission to use the toilet if necessary.
- The teachers will inform and remind the children of playground safety rules.

Classroom Emergencies

Children’s emergency contacts and the town emergency numbers are posted in the classroom. Parents should give permission and authorization to the teachers on the

registration form for the teachers to seek emergency medical care in the event a parent cannot be reached.

HNS maintains an Emergency Response Plan. A committee of parents, in coordination with local fire and rescue professionals, wrote this plan to cover emergency preparedness and procedures, and the plan is reviewed and updated each school year. The plan includes checking smoke detectors regularly, practicing emergency drills, keeping emergency supplies, making evacuation plans and making plans for sheltering in place. The Emergency Response Plan will be posted on the bulletin board inside the classroom.

Illness

Please keep children at home when they exhibit any new or active symptoms of illness or if they have exhibited symptoms within the previous 24 hours. The child should be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Children on antibiotics should not attend school for at least 24 hours in order for the antibiotic to take effect. The teachers may require a parent to take a child home if the child shows signs of illness.

Contact the director/teachers if your child becomes ill with any contagious disease such as head lice, conjunctivitis, chicken pox or strep throat so that other families may be notified of the health risk.

Please also see COVID Policy for more specifics regarding illness and return to school.

Medications

Medications may only be given to your child when accompanied by a signed medication form (available in the classroom) and specific directions for administration are included. All medications must be in original containers with the child's name and health care provider on it.

Medical Conditions

Teachers should be notified of your child's medical conditions/concerns (i.e., allergies, asthma, and medications). All information regarding allergies and chronic conditions must be written and submitted to the teachers prior to the first day of class. If emergency medications are necessary, please label and explain its administration and use to the teachers.

Fire Drills and Lockdown Drills

The school has a fire drill procedure and a lockdown procedure, and the children will practice periodically through the school year.

Reporting Requirements/Child Abuse or Neglect

HNS staff members are trained to detect signs of abuse and neglect in children. We will do daily observations and will ask you about any new injuries and if any special care is required. The teachers are required by State law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. Should you have any concerns, please talk to one of the teachers or contact:

VT Social & Rehabilitation Services (802) 863-7370
After hours emergency (800) 649-5285

Administration

* Please note that policies, procedures, fees & tuition, are subject to change every school year.

Admissions / School Year

Admissions

The Hinesburg Nursery School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic origin, or gender in the policy of accepting children to be cared for at the school, in the employment of staff or in the appointment of officers of the organization. No person shall be refused membership in the organization on the basis of race, religion, color, ethnic origin, or gender.

Admission priority is given in the following order, provided the application arrives in a timely manner.

1. Current/returning families
2. New Families with children who qualify for ELP funding on September 1st.
3. Families with children below the age of 3.

Age Requirements

Enrollment is open to children ages 3-5.

Acceptance/Registration/Enrollment

Students are generally accepted for the class provided there is space available, the child is the appropriate age, and the parents agree to pay the appropriate fees and comply with the rules and responsibilities of the cooperative. A returning family's application may be rejected if the family has not fulfilled the Hinesburg Nursery School responsibilities in the past. Spring enrollment is considered only if fall enrollment is not full.

Health Certification Requirements

The State of Vermont requires that all families file an up-to-date immunization record for each child entering the program. The State requires that a completed Authorization/Release Form be on file at school for each child registered, listing any person authorized by the parents to pick up the child, even if the parents are the only authorized individuals listed. Emergency Contact Phone Numbers must be kept current and on file at school. These forms need to be completed each school year.

Calendar

We operate for 35 weeks in the school years. We follow the Champlain Valley School District (CVSD) calendar for holidays and school vacation. The last day of school is usually 1 to 2 weeks prior to the end of the Hinesburg Community School year.

Snow Day (Delay) Policy

We follow HCS snow day closings. If HCS is on a one hour delay, HNS will be delayed by one hour. If HCS is on a two hour delay, HNS will be on a two hour delay. Pick-up time is still 12:00pm.

Photos

Photos are taken at the beginning of each school year. We like to use photos on our website, Instagram and Facebook accounts, as well as in Hinesburg Record articles and in other printed materials. A release is included in the body of the registration form. If you have any objections, please make this clear to the Vice President, who assists with all enrollment details.

Fees & Tuition

Fees & Tuition

TUITION	
Number of days per week	2021-22 Tuition per month
2	\$270/month
3	\$400/month

A registration fee plus a deposit of one month's tuition is due with your application in order to reserve a spot for your child. The total deposit will depend on the number of days the student attends school. If there is a lapse of at least one full school year between children in the same family attending the program, the family will be considered "new."

The 2021-2022 registration fee is \$85 for returning families and \$125 for new families. This results in the following deposits for each child:

- For **new students attending 2 days** the deposit will be \$395 (\$125 fee + one month tuition of \$270); for **returning students attending 2 days**, the deposit is \$355 (\$85 fee + one month tuition of \$270)
- For **new students attending 3 days** the deposit will be \$525 (\$125 fee + one month tuition of \$400); for **returning students attending 3 days**, the deposit is \$485 (\$85 fee + one month tuition of \$400)

The registration fee is non-refundable should you decide not to enroll your child. If you do enroll, a portion of the fee (minus the registration fee) will be applied towards your first month's tuition.

Tuition for the following school year is voted upon by the board. Tuition is due prior to the first of each month throughout the school year. A 5% penalty will be added for late payment after the 15th of the month. If payment is not made by the last day of the month, the student's slot will be considered open for other applicants. Checks should be made payable to the Hinesburg Nursery School and left in the treasurer's folder at the school or mailed to PO Box 7, Hinesburg, VT 05461. The Treasurer should be contacted if there are tuition concerns, including making alternative payment arrangements. HNS is qualified to accept VT state subsidy payments.

Early withdrawal from the program requires that the departing family give at least two weeks' notice prior to the effective end-date by notifying both teachers and the Vice-President. The family is also obligated to pay tuition through that two-week period in question.

Families who receive the Early Learning Partnership (ELP) funding benefit through their school district will not have to pay tuition monthly; the benefit will be sent directly to Hinesburg Nursery School. The ELP funds will cover all tuition costs for 10 hours of instruction (equivalent to attending 3 mornings at HNS each week). Families are required to pay all enrollment fees. Currently HNS is an ELP with Champlain Valley School District (CVSD), Chittenden East Supervisory Union (CESU), South Burlington School District (SBSD) and Mount Abe Unified School District (MAUSD). CVSD, CESU/MMUSD, SBSD and MAUSD will inform parents of the availability of early education services. Families are responsible for applying for these services as well as enrolling in Hinesburg Nursery School. If you are a family receiving ELP funding, you will be responsible for paying the registration fee (including one month of tuition as described above). The tuition portion will be reimbursed to the family once HNS receives payment from the school district, typically early in the fall.

Scholarships

Each year a portion of fundraising money goes toward a scholarship fund. This can provide partial scholarships for children enrolled in the program. Preference is given to returning families. Guidelines for eligibility may vary each year. Information regarding current year eligibility can be obtained by contacting our Treasurer.

Staff Information

Hiring of Teachers

Being an Equal Opportunity Employer, a general advertised announcement will be made when a teaching vacancy occurs, and all qualified applicants will be interviewed. Contracts between the school and each teacher are negotiated each spring.

CONTACTS

Hinesburg Nursery School, (802) 482-3827	Absences, late arrivals/pickups.
www.Hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Information about the school, enrollment information and frequently asked questions.
President - Sara Lovitz, (802) 289-9440 president@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	General functioning and administration of school.
Vice President - Laura Edling, (802) 363-1007 info@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Registration, attendance changes, family directory, policy and procedure questions, address changes, handbook and form updates.
Secretary – Heather Caulfield, (802) 999-9617 secretary@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Copies of minutes from all meetings and all memos. In charge of ELP attendance, census, and school progress schedule. Maintain social media presence.
Treasurer - Greg Cluver, (802) 318-5970 treasurer@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Tuition related issues, reimbursement for school authorized expenses, scholarship information.
Fundraising - Amanda Webb, (518) 572-3844 fundraising@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Fundraising questions and committee information.
Maintenance Coordinator - Lindsay Gardner, (802) 578-1008	Repairs and supplies.
Public Relations - Marley Powden, 802-310-2458 PR@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Events, newspaper articles, public acknowledgment, sandwich board.
Director/Co-Teacher - Wendy Frink, (802) 881-7377 Director@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Specific program/teacher issues. Questions concerning your child.
Co-Teacher - Becky Cook, (802) 578-7361 Teacher@hinesburgnurseryschool.org	Specific program/teacher issues. Questions concerning your child.

Parent Responsibility Contract

This needs to be signed by each family.

Membership in this parent cooperative provides the chance for parents to work together, assist in the program and maintain the financial health of the school. As members, parents are responsible for:

1. **Registration and Tuition** – You are responsible for a registration fee, including a deposit. Tuition is paid monthly unless a student is receiving ELP funding through their school district.
2. **Meetings** – Please plan to attend 2 parent meetings. Board members will present the status of the school at each meeting, request parent feedback regarding various issues, and ask parents to vote on varied topics including the school budget.
3. **Fundraising** - Fundraising is crucial to the financial health of our school. All families are required to participate in fundraising throughout the year.
4. **Cleaning & Maintenance** - Parents are responsible for maintaining the school during cleanup days held several times during the school year.
5. **Field Trips** - Parent volunteers are needed to chaperone and drive the class on field trips.
6. **Drop off and Pick up** - School is open from 8:15am. to 12pm. Children may be **dropped off no earlier than 8:15 am and picked up by 12pm**. When you are on the premises – in the school or on the playground – you are responsible for your child. You must sign in and out.
7. **Illness** – If your child is sick, do not bring them to school.
8. **Parent Involvement** – Parents are invited and welcome in the school at any time. Teachers invite you to share a special skill or volunteer to help in the classroom.
9. **Management** - Parents are responsible for managing the preschool business as well as the facility. Some parents are elected onto the Board of Directors (BOD). Board members attend a monthly meeting.

I understand that the above responsibilities are required as part of a membership in the Hinesburg Nursery School parent cooperative and I agree to participate. If I am unable to fulfill my obligations, I understand that my membership may be forfeited.

Parent Printed Name and Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

This signature page and content is a Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) requirement. Do not remove.