



Bright Start Afterschool Program 2024-2025

Staff

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Jeanne Wall, *Group Leader*

Jules Stewart, *Group Leader*

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Lettie Carswell, *Asst. Group Leader*

The Bright Start Afterschool Program will not discriminate in providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, disability or marital status.

Mission Statement

Bright Start strives to provide a dynamic enrichment program with highly qualified teachers who celebrate the unique voice of each child and foster creative, collaborative, and investigative hands-on learning opportunities.

Bright Start strives to promote a nurturing, inclusive, multi-age environment where children can form lasting friendships and build community.

Bright Start staff strives to model respect for self, colleagues, children, and parents.

Forward

This handbook will give you insight into the background and goals of the Bright Start Afterschool Program. In addition, it provides information regarding the program and its policies. Please read this handbook and keep it for reference during the school year. Your support and cooperation will ensure that Bright Start continues to be an effective and high quality program.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the Bright Start Afterschool Program, please contact Director, Lyndsay McCaffery at 781-641-3701 or brightstartadm@gmail.com. If you are interested in learning about the program's regulatory compliance history, please contact the Department of Early Education and Care, phone number 978-689-7618, 360 Merrimack St., Building 9, Third Flr., Entrance I, Lawrence, MA, 01843.

History

Bright Start began as a home-based kindergarten, extended day, and afterschool program in the Bishop School neighborhood in 1991, and was owned by Andrea Gingrande. It has served hundreds of families of children aged five through eleven years old.

Bright Start is incorporated. As of September of 2000, Bright Start has operated in the cafeteria of the Bishop School located at 25 Columbia Road in Arlington, MA. Andrea retired as Director in June of 2021 and Lyndsay took over in this role after being a Bright Start teacher/administrator for 8 years.

The Bright Start Afterschool Program is licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care. It provides a program for students K through 5th grade (ages 5 through 11) enrolled in the Bishop School. Bright Start does not discriminate in providing service to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, national origin, cultural heritage, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, financial or marital status or disabilities. The afterschool program is designed to provide a safe and stimulating environment for the Bishop School students after their normal school hours.

Philosophy

Above all, Bright Start's philosophy is built upon self-respect and the respect of others. At Bright Start, we honor the abilities, talents and creativity of the individual child. We pay close attention to all aspects of self-development: intellectual, creative, physical, social and emotional. Each child is exposed to a carefully crafted curriculum, full of rich content that emphasizes scientific discovery, intellectual exploration, and creative expression. Children are also taught the skills that enable them to get the most out of these experiences, which include problem-solving games and projects in arts, crafts, sciences, drama, music and more! They are encouraged to extract what is meaningful to them and to share their understanding through a variety of individual and group activities.

Management of the Program

The overall management of the Bright Start program is the responsibility of the director. Day-to-day management of the program is by the director, along with Olly Jay, Assistant Director. In the absence of the director, the Site Coordinator is Olly Jay.

Program Goals

Bright Start is committed to providing each child with a warm, safe and secure environment. We offer a strong enrichment program that opens children's eyes to new subject areas that are complementary to their regular school experience. Bright Start enthusiastically promotes each child's unique interests, hobbies, and abilities. We especially foster self-respect, respect for others, inclusiveness, and a healthy social development.

Telephone Numbers

The **Bright Start phone number** is **781-641-3701**. An answering machine will pick up during the time that the program is not in operation and when the staff and children are out of the room. If you reach the answering machine, please provide both your name and your child's name in any messages that you leave.

Normal Hours of Operation

The Bright Start Afterschool Program is officially open during the school year. The program operates from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm on M, T, Th, F and 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Wednesdays.

For February vacation, Bright Start coverage will be available from 8:30am until 4:00pm at the Bishop School from Tuesday through Friday. Bright Start is closed during the December and April vacation weeks. Bright Start will stay open on all Early Release/Conference days. Bright Start is closed on Voting Days that require use of the Bishop Cafeteria. Bright Start will be closed on the last day of school.

Schedule of Holidays and Vacations

Bright Start is open with the *exception of the following legal holidays, and 2 paid vacation weeks.*

- Rosh Hashanah
- Yom Kippur
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Winter Vacation Break
- Martin L. King Birthday
- FEBRUARY VACATION:
 - President's Day (no Bright Start this day)
 - **Bright Start open Tuesday – Friday**
- Good Friday
- April Vacation Week
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth

Closing Early Due to Bad Weather

The decision to close the Bright Start program is based on various reports. Ultimately, it is a judgment call and bound to be imperfect because the weather is unpredictable. Our decision is only as good as the information we receive from the media, other public school systems and personal reports. If more than one report states that roads will be dangerous any time during Bright Start hours, the director will take into consideration the safety of the children, staff and the parents in making the decision to close or not. The decision to close early is made as early as possible to allow enough time to contact parents of all the children attending the program on that day. **We will inform you through the ProCare App and email.**

Every winter poses special challenges for obvious reasons. *The important point is that if you feel the weather is taking a turn for the worse we encourage you to call us and/or come early to pick up your child.* If the school year is extended due to school cancellations, in most cases, our program will remain open.

Snow Days/Conference/Early Release Days

Bright Start will be open on all conference days. We are **not** allowed to be in the building on snow days or full-day professional days. Therefore, Bright Start will not operate on snow days or the full-day professional day/s.

Registration/Enrollment

Children aged kindergarten through fifth grade who attend Bishop School are eligible for enrollment in Bright Start. In order to attend Bright Start Afterschool, an enrollment form must be completed each year indicating what times and days your child will be attending the program. There is a non-refundable registration fee plus a deposit towards tuition for each child. The deposit will be applied towards September's tuition bill.

Enrollment forms from returning families will be reviewed first and availability will be determined. New families will be placed in a lottery system. All deadlines for enrollment will be listed. If you do not submit the forms by the deadline, you will be placed on a waiting list and considered only after all other families have been reviewed.

Tuition

The cost of attending is based on the number of hours per day and specific number of days per week that each child is enrolled in the program. When two or more children from the same family are enrolled in the program, the first child's tuition is discounted. There is also a sliding-scale tuition policy, which is available according to need. No child is ever rejected because of a parent's inability to pay the tuition rate. The matter is discussed and negotiated in the beginning of the year on an individual basis in the utmost of confidentiality.

Because the maintenance personnel must stay until everyone is out of the building, a strict pick-up policy will be in effect. **A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any child being picked up after 6:00 pm.**

Arrival of Children

Children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade will be brought outside by their classroom teacher and picked up by a Bright Start staff member. Attendance is taken at this time. Children will then be walked by a Bright Start staff member to the cafeteria where attendance will be taken a second time.

Older children (3rd-5th graders) are allowed to walk themselves to a location to be determined at the beginning of the school year. If a child has not arrived by 10 minutes after the bell, someone will be sent to their classroom to see if they have been delayed by the teacher. If they are not there, parents will be notified immediately. This stricter policy will be enforced because of increased liability to the school and Bright Start. Make sure you discuss the responsibility of getting to Bright Start **promptly** with your child. While

Bright Start cannot assume responsibility for the children *until* they are in our care (i.e. in the Bright Start room), the staff accepts responsibility to ensure that the children who are scheduled to attend are all accounted for. Bright Start also makes note of arrival times of children attending other activities before coming to Bright Start. If you wish to have your child attend other activities such as Arlington Community Education classes, soccer, Brownies, The Bishop Play etc., before coming down to Bright Start, email brightstart.olly@gmail.com and let us know.

Picking Up Children: Normal Procedure and ProCare Sign Out

Children in the after school program are picked up at the end of their day by a parent, other family member, or designated adult. If you pick up M, T, Th before 3:45, children will be outside if the weather permits. If you pick up from 3:45-4:45, your child will be involved in a teacher led structured activity. If you pick up between 5:00 and 6:00, your child will be outside or in the cafeteria doing free play. On Wednesdays, Bright Start does activities from 3:30 to 4:30.

Bright Start has implemented **Procare, an automated checkout system using the Procare app**. Bright Start will send out a tutorial on how to set up and use your app to check out your child. Lyndsay and Olly will be available to help should you have trouble using your app while at Bright Start.

Once you sign out your child on the app, staff will be notified inside and will get your child out to you as soon as possible. If your child has not come out in five minutes, please call Bright Start at 781-641-3701. There are times where we may get a few sign out alerts in a row and someone might be missed. We encourage you to assist us in locating your child outside whenever possible.

It is important to let a Bright Start teacher know that you have picked up your child when we are outside. Either speak to a teacher/person directly or catch a teacher's eye. Otherwise, the staff will be looking for your child.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, Bright Start must have prior written or verbal permission from you, the parent. Emailing the person's name is fine. A child will not be released to anyone unless we have written confirmation that the person is allowed to pick up your child. In an emergency (i.e. disabled car), a child may be released to an individual with whom the child is familiar, even though s/he had not previously been authorized to pick up the child. In this case, you, the parent, can call and let us know who will be arriving for pick-up.

The program ends at 6:00 p.m. sharp. If your child remains after 6:00 pm, a reasonable effort will be made to contact one or both parents. If no contact is made, arrangements will be made to have someone on your approved authorization list to pick up your child. If you are unavoidably delayed from the expected pickup time, please make an effort to contact the program, if for no other reason than to reassure your child that you are on your way.

A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed past 6 pm. This fee is charged regardless of the reason for lateness and will be added to your monthly bill for extra hours. If late pick up of a child becomes a chronic problem, the director will work with you to find an alternate pick up arrangement.

Normal Absence/Dismissal to Other Activities

If your child **will not** be attending Bright Start as scheduled, please notify Olly at brightstart.olly@gmail.com or call Bright Start at 781-641-3701.

Otherwise, if your child will be delayed on a regular basis, or if s/he leaves early on days that s/he is scheduled to attend other activities (e.g. sports, religious training, music lessons, extra help, etc.) then you must email us beforehand. Children attending other activities before coming to Bright Start must be escorted to Bright Start with an adult.

Medication

In accordance with state regulations, prescribed drugs can be administered to children by the Bright Start staff only under the following circumstances. The medication must be a current prescription in its original container with the child's name, date, identification of the medication, dosage and special instructions clearly marked. Bright Start staff may not administer the first dose. Non-prescription drugs, in their original container and not out-of-date, can be administered to children by the Bright Start staff only with written instructions (including dosage) of a physician. In all cases, Bright Start also requires a written request from the parents with instructions as to dosage and dosage times. In special cases, such as bronchial inhalers for asthmatic children, the child may be permitted to administer his/her own medication with staff supervision. Once again, written instructions from the physician and written parental consent are required. See the Individual Health Care Plan. A written record of all medications administered to your child while at Bright Start will be kept in your child's file. When sending in a prescription medication, a completed Medication Consult Form must accompany the medicine. This form is available upon request.

Emergency/Evacuation Procedures

All children attending Bright Start must have an up-to-date medical release form on file. This form identifies the individuals to be contacted in case the parents are not available. This includes the child's pediatrician and the hospital to which you prefer your child to go in an emergency (if the child is taken by the Arlington Fire Department ambulance or another emergency vehicle, it is probable that the child will be brought to the nearest appropriate medical center).

If your child becomes seriously ill while at Bright Start, you will be notified and asked to pick up your child as soon as possible. Your child's pediatrician may also be called if the situation warrants such attention.

Bright Start shares the same policies on COVID-19 and masking as Bishop School. We support all families in their choice to wear or not wear a mask. If you choose to have your child be masked, please discuss your wishes with them ahead of time as we cannot keep track of who needs to wear one.

In case of an accident, the following will occur depending upon the severity of the injury. If the injury is minor, simple first aid will be applied on the spot and you will be notified at the time, or when you pick up your child. If the injury is more severe, you will be called immediately. If neither parent can be reached right away, your emergency contact person will be called and asked to arrange for the child to be taken to the doctor if that seems advisable. If the accident is very serious, the Arlington Fire Department will be contacted and asked to provide emergency care to your child. Simultaneously, Bright

Start will call both you and your child's pediatrician to arrange for your child to be met and treated at the hospital.

In cases of a serious accident, an accident report will be completed and signed by you and a Bright Start staff member. A copy will be given to you and also kept on file at Bright Start.

Please be assured that Bright Start's health care policies are in conformance with the recommendations set by the Massachusetts Department of Health and Department of Early Education and Care and are reviewed regularly by our health care consultant. Each staff member receives a copy of these policies and is trained in their implementation during staff orientation. Also, the Bright Start teachers are all Red Cross certified in First Aid and CPR. Further details of Bright Start's health and emergency policies, including staff responsibilities for emergency and preventive health measures, are available for your review upon request.

In the case of a missing child, all staff and adults will be put on alert immediately. Two staff will be put in charge of searching the building and searching outside. The remaining staff will stay with the Bright Start children in the cafeteria until the child is found. If after fifteen minutes to a half hour has gone by, the police will be contacted.

If there is a need to evacuate the school for any reason, our plan is the same as the Bishop's plan. We will congregate outside near the spaceball playground (winter) or baseball diamond (fall, spring), take attendance and proceed to Stratton Elementary School.

Coordination with Referral Resources

Bright Start has procedures for referring parents and children to appropriate social, mental health, educational, medical, dental, and vision services. The staff will inform the director of any concerns regarding a child whose behavior seems to require intervention services. The staff will observe and record the child's behavior. Parents will then be notified and a meeting will be arranged to discuss observations made and ways to accommodate the child's needs. If after a reasonable period, it is determined that a referral is necessary, Bright Start staff will provide a written statement including the reasons for the referral, and a summary of the observations and efforts made to accommodate the child's needs. The program maintains a list of community based social, educational, medical, and mental health services to serve the needs of Bright Start families. This referral list is available upon request.

Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

The Bright Start Afterschool Program shall protect children in its care from abuse and neglect and shall report such incidents to the Department of Social Services. As required by law (M.G.L.C.119, S.51A), all Bright Start teachers are mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect (including physical, sexual and psychological) whether related to in-program or home environments. Specific, formal procedures are followed in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. All teachers are given copies and trained in these procedures.

Prevention of Abuse and Neglect

Bright Start's written reporting procedures are:

- (1) The staff member will notify the Program Director and file a 51A report with the Department of Social Services, if child abuse is suspected in the program or in the home environment.
- (2) The Department of Early Education and Care will be notified promptly after the filing of the 51A report.
- (3) The procedure will include ensuring that an allegedly abusive or neglectful staff member does not work directly with children until the investigation by the Department of Social Services is completed and such further time as the Office requires.
- (4) If home abuse is alleged, then the Department of Social Services will complete the mandatory follow-up procedures.

Prohibition Statement

Bright Start prohibits:

1. Spanking or other corporal punishment of children
2. Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect or abusive treatment
3. Depriving children of meals or snacks
4. Force feeding children
5. Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet: forcing a child to remain on the toilet or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.

Behavioral Management Policy

Bright Start has a behavior management policy based on the following principles: help the child identify behaviors that are unacceptable, have the child understand why the behaviors are unacceptable, help each child gain control of those behaviors and maximize each child's growth and development. At the beginning of each school year children and staff develop expectations to be followed by everyone. These expectations will be referred to as reminders of appropriate behavior.

If a problem arises, Bright Start staff will always listen non-critically to both (or more) children's side of the incident to uncover what motivated the child to misbehave in the first place. Secondly, the children are asked to express alternate ways they could have handled the situation. If none are offered, teachers will model more appropriate responses. If the children still seem to require separation, a break will be suggested until composure can be renewed, however, no longer than 3 to 5 minutes is expected. The staff works hard to prevent situations from occurring by consistently reinforcing appropriate behaviors, by role-playing difficult situations, or by trying to step in quickly if a conflict arises. At no time is any child subject to cruel, severe or unusual punishment, corporal punishment, physical hitting of any manner, verbal abuse, ridicule, humiliation, or denial of food, rest or bathroom facilities. A child shall not be punished for soiling or wetting themselves or for not using bathroom facilities. Nor shall a child be punished for eating or not eating their food. However, if a child physically grabs, punches or attacks another child in an unsafe manner and that child does not respond to words to stop immediately, the adult will physically remove the child for the safety of all concerned.

Should a behavior problem persist, the child's parents will be notified and asked to work with the staff to resolve the problem. Persistent problems will also be brought to the attention of the director. Unusual or serious behavioral incidents, such as intentional property destruction or intentional injury to oneself or others will be brought to the immediate attention of the child's parents by the program director as well as documented and filed as part of the child's record. If a problem remains subsequent to a meeting with the child's parents, the director reserves the right to require the child to withdraw from the program either temporarily or permanently. This policy is in place to protect the good of the group and the individuals within it.

Suspension and Termination Policy

A child may be suspended from the program if after a problem has been brought to the attention of the parents, the problem has not resolved itself in the agreed upon timeframe. Unusual or serious behavioral incidents as well as persistent behavioral problems may be cause for consideration of suspension. Prior to the temporary withdrawal of a child, the director will discuss the situation. Inputs from the parents and staff will be welcome and duly considered. The period of suspension will be a minimum of two days and no more than five days. The reason for suspension and the suspension time period will be documented and filed as part of the child's Bright Start record. Tuition will not be refunded for this period of absence.

After the suspension period, the child will be readmitted into the program with a two month probationary period. If no further incidents occur during the two months, the child shall be considered off probation. If, however, there are subsequent behavioral problems during the probationary period, the director reserves the right to take further action such as a further suspension or a requirement that the child no longer attend the program for the remainder of the academic year. Once again, prior to any action being taken, consideration will be given to input from the parents and staff.

Research and Observations

The Bright Start Afterschool Program may, on a very rare occasion, participate in a research project that includes observation of the children. Under no circumstances will a child in Bright Start be placed under observation for purposes of research without the informed written consent of the parents. Most often, consent is required for each observation occurrence. A more general written consent may be allowed for situations in which there is an ongoing effort and in which there is no interaction between the child and the observer. At no time will any identification of an individual child be allowed.

Prior written parental consent is also required for other activities not directly related to the Bright Start program such as fund raising, publicity or media interviews or pictures.

Child's Records

The program director of Bright Start keeps a file for each child enrolled in the program. These files include information added to the file by the director, administrative staff or teachers (e.g. accident reports, parent conference notes, descriptions of behavioral problems, etc.) as well as all the forms that parents are asked to complete throughout the year (e.g. registration form, emergency contacts form, requests to administer medicine, etc.) If your child is new to the program, you will be required to complete multiple forms that are required by the Department of Early Education and Care. If your child

is returning to the program, you will be required to review and update the existing records. In addition, you will need to redo any necessary authorization information since it remains valid for only one academic year. Please keep your child's information up-to-date throughout the year, particularly the telephone numbers of your home, work, and those of your emergency contacts.

In accordance with the rules and regulations of the Department of Early Education and Care, information in a child's file is privileged and confidential and is kept for a minimum of five years following the child's departure from the program. A copy of any information in the file is available to you upon request. Bright Start will not release information from these files to any unauthorized person without your prior written permission. Note, however, that in accordance with state regulations, these records may be made available to the Department of Early Education and Care. In such a case, you will be notified that your child's records have been subpoenaed and a written log will be kept by the director indicating the time and person to whom the information was released. This situation would only happen in the case of a court order.

Snack Food

A snack is provided twice during the after-school program. A list of items that are provided for snacks is posted. All food is served and stored according to standards set forth by the USDA and the Massachusetts Department for Early Education and Care. For further information regarding these standards please see the director. If any snack is a problem for your child, please notify the program director. ****YOU CAN FEEL FREE TO SEND YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR OWN SNACK IF YOU PREFER. ALL SNACKS SHOULD BE NUT AND SESAME FREE AND CLEARLY LABELED.****

Clothing

If your child is a kindergartner, please try to find Velcro shoes unless they are very proficient in tying their own shoes tightly and in a double knot. All Bright Start children are required to go outside together in order to have proper supervision. Please assist us by having children wear or bring clothes that are appropriate for outdoors and for play. Please consider afternoon weather conditions when sending your child to school in the morning.

One complete change of clothing should also be provided for each child in their backpack. The clothing should be available every day during the school year. This is especially important during the colder or wetter times of the year. Children will tend to get wet and need warm, dry clothing to change into. For the convenience of all, please be sure your child's name is on all their clothing, in a bag also labeled with their name. Any soiled clothing will be sealed in a plastic bag, labeled with your child's name and returned to you at the end of the day. Replacement clothing should be delivered back to the school as soon as possible.

Bright Start Current Activity Schedule

2:30 -- 2:50	Wash Hands and Snack
2:50 -- 3:30	Outside Play/Homework
3:45 -- 4:30/:45	Curriculum Activities
4:30 -- 4:50	Second Snack

4:50 -- 6:00

Homework, Games, Free Play

Program Plan

Bright Start offers various activities that promote the children's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being and growth. These activities meet the children's needs for intellectual, academic, social, emotional, recreational, cultural enrichment, and diverse learning opportunities. Currently, the subjects offered include: arts, crafts, science, cooking, physical fitness, music, drama, and creative writing.

Staff

The Bright Start Afterschool Program is under the direction of a certified and experienced teacher/director. The director hires the staff (either administrators, teachers or assistant leaders). A person hired must have significant experience in the classroom or as a child care provider. All teachers are also certified to provide emergency First Aid and regularly monitor the activity of each child. In accordance with Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care regulations, the ratio of 1 teacher to 13 children will be maintained. Thus, as enrollment increases, additional teachers may be hired to maintain an appropriate teacher/child ratio. At all times sufficient staff is available as will be appropriate for the activities available.

Homework

Children, particularly the older ones, will be encouraged to work on their homework either when they arrive or later each day. A section in the cafeteria will be set aside for this purpose. A Bright Start staff person will do their best to supervise but cannot be expected to offer homework assistance nor guarantee that all homework will be completed. It is the parents responsibility to check over homework with your child. If you would like to make a formal request that your child does their homework at Bright Start, please email Olly at brightstart.olly@gmail.com. Please note that Bright Start does not allow children to do homework on devices. If your child needs to do homework using a device, please email Olly at brightstart.olly@gmail.com.

Communication of Information

Bright Start will work hard to keep you informed about the program, schedules and any pertinent announcements via the ProCare App, or email. It is important that you check your app and/or email regarding all Bright Start information.

Normal Parent Involvement

There are many opportunities for parent involvement in the Bright Start Afterschool Program. While parent participation is not required, your help and interest is always welcome. If you have a special area of interest, or a special talent that you would like to share with the children, please let the director know. Suggestions for special visitors, for special activities or for sources of supplies or services are also appreciated.

Procedures for Parents

Parents are encouraged to provide input by emailing the director as well as calling to discuss any concerns or questions. Conference times are easily arranged throughout the year at a parent’s request. Parents will be notified immediately if there are any problems with behavior or illness.

Feedback/Questions

The director will meet with any prospective parents and children prior to admission to provide an opportunity for the parent and child to visit the program and meet the staff. Bright Start has an open door policy so those parents can visit at any time during the year. Individual conferences regarding your child’s progress can be arranged. Parents are welcome to observe their child, however, scheduled appointments are appreciated. Parents of enrolled children are always welcome to discuss anything regarding the program and the children.

If you have concerns regarding a Bright Start staff member please bring it to the attention of the program director. Initially, the program director will have a private meeting with you to discuss the situation. It is then probable that the director will meet with the staff member to present the concern and to develop a course of action. In some cases, a meeting of the two parties may be suggested to try to resolve the issue.

Conclusion

Welcome to the Bright Start Afterschool Program! Please be involved as much as you can and let the staff know what you like and what you would like to see improved. We hope that your experience and your child’s experience will be a happy and rewarding one.

