

Berkley Charter Preschool Parent Handbook



Berkley Charter Preschool
5240 Berkley Road
Auburndale, Florida 33823
(863)968-5024
Fax (863)968-5026



Berkley Charter Preschool

2026-2027 School Year

LEARNING FOR ALL, WHATEVER IT TAKES

Deanna Brewer, PreK Director
deanna.brewer@berkleyknights.net

DCF#C10PO0553

Program Information

Enrollment Procedure

Applications for the next school year will begin to be accepted during Berkley's Open Enrollment period. Check the school's website at www.berkleyknights.net to get the dates from year to year.

Any child residing in Polk County who is ready to enter PreK3 or PreK4 and is the appropriate age as mandated by the state guidelines may apply to Berkley Charter School (BCS) Preschool. BCS holds a fair and impartial admission procedure allowing all students an equal opportunity to attend the school.

All applications may be mailed, emailed, faxed or submitted in person during school hours. Applications submitted in person will be date and time stamped for proof of submittal date. Applications received via mail must have a postmark of one of the five days of open enrollment. A faxed application will be date and time stamped as if it were delivered in person. All applications received during the week of open enrollment will be treated as though they arrived at the same time. A computerized lottery system will be used to randomly select applicants to fill seats as space becomes available.

Once the open enrollment period ends, all applications will be sorted by grade level then placed on priority lists in accordance with the following guidelines:

Applicants with a parent employed by either Berkley Charter School or Berkley Accelerated Middle School or actively serving as a governing board director at either school (Priority List A).

PreK students with a sibling currently attending Berkley Charter School (Priority List B).

PreK4 students who attended Berkley Charter School's PreK3 program (Priority List C).

Children in the Berkley Charter School zone as defined by the Polk County School Board (Priority List D).

Any other child is considered out-of-zone (Priority List E).

When an opening exists, applicants will be randomly selected from priority lists A-E respectively, until all available openings have been filled. Once all available seats have been filled the applications will be held in an applicant pool. When a seat becomes available a random lottery will be performed at that time in the order of priority lists A-E respectively.

Licensing Information

Berkley Charter Preschool (BCP) follows the policies and regulations set forth by the Florida State Department of Environmental Health Services, Department of Education, Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) DCF#C10PO0553, and Polk Early Learning Coalition (Polk ELC).

Monitoring

Our school is routinely inspected by the Polk County Health Department and Polk County Fire Department. We are monitored by DCF for our Early Childhood Program and Polk ELC for our VPK program.

Staff Background Screening

Berkley Charter Preschool is required by law to perform background checks on all employed staff. These are done in the following ways:

- Fingerprint submission to FDLE (Level 2)
- Locally through the Police Department
- Federally through the FBI and National Abuse Registry
- Reference and employment screening

Staff Continuing Education

Berkley Charter School Preschool Staff are required to continually update their educational qualifications by earning college credits, continuing educational units (CEU), and in-service hours annually. All VPK teachers are, at a minimum, CDA certified, as required through Florida State Law.

Preschool and Parent Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the preschool to:

- Provide a clean and safe environment for your child.
- Provide an environment conducive to learning.
- Hire and train qualified and quality teachers and staff.
- Abide by all regulations set forth by Polk County and the State of Florida.
- Communicate effectively with parents, guardians, and children.

It is the responsibility of the preschool parent or guardian to:

- Communicate all concerns to the child's teacher or preschool administration.
- Pay tuition and before and aftercare charges when due.
- Follow the school's policies and health regulations.
- Attend school conferences as requested by either the student's teacher or school administration.
- Ensure that their child arrives at their classroom prepared with any supplies that may be needed.
- Ensure that a healthy snack is made available to the student's class on his/her assigned snack day (for Prek4 this will be used after VPK hours).
- Arrive and depart with child at appropriate times and use proper procedures as established.

Agendas

Agendas will be given to you by your child's teacher. This is a great form of communication between home and school. Please review it nightly to see if any written or attached messages are included in that day's spot. Finally, send your child's agenda back to school with him/her daily.

After-Care Program

After care is a service provided for parents who work after school hours and for unforeseen circumstances when after care may be needed. Pre-K after care hours are from 3:00pm-5:30pm. The charge is \$8 per hour. Our school closes promptly at 5:30pm every evening. If your child is not signed out by 5:30 PM you will be charged \$1.00 per minute for every minute thereafter. This charge will automatically be added to your monthly after-care bill. If your child is staying for after-care, please make sure you pack a nutritious snack. Make sure your child is aware they have a snack, and place it in a compartment that is easy for them to get to in their backpack.

Allergies

We ask that medical forms be complete and updated as needed throughout the school year. If your child suffers from any allergies (either food or environmental), we ask that you provide our administration with full step-by-step instructions on treatment and notification procedures. A doctor's note may be required.

If a food allergy is severe, we ask that you please provide a snack that can be kept in your child's classroom in case the class snack is not a safe choice for your child.

Attendance Policy

- If your child will be absent from our program parents/guardians are to notify the teacher in advance of the absence if possible or the morning of the absence. If notification of an absence is not given to the teacher, the teacher is required to call to verify the child's absence.
- All full day classes begin promptly at 7:50 AM. Our half day programs begin at 7:45am (morning) and 11:45am (afternoon). Drop-off begins at 7:30 AM. Excessive tardiness impedes on his/her ability to learn as well as the learning of others. This may be cause for discharge from our school and/or the State VPK program.
- VPK students may not exceed more than three **unexcused** absences per calendar month. Excused absences are listed as follows: illness or injury to the child or family member which requires hospitalization or bed rest (doctor's note is required); doctor's appointment; infectious or parasitic disease; funeral service or bereavement upon the death of a family member; compliance with a court order; special education services; observance of a religious holiday or service; and family vacation (may not exceed more than 5 days per program year).
- Any extenuating circumstances may receive some lenience within the program. Please speak with Deanna Brewer, Preschool Director @ 968-5024 for possible approval.

In order to receive the greatest benefit from our program, we feel strongly that children must be on time and present on a consistent basis. We are always here to help with any extenuating circumstances; communication is of the utmost importance. Please feel free to contact the front office with any questions or concerns.

Breakfast

We do not provide the PreK children breakfast, therefore please make sure your child has breakfast before they come to school.

Calendar

PreK classes will follow same school, holiday, and hurricane calendar/schedule as Berkley Charter School K-5, excluding early release days.

Classroom Rules

We choose to be safe, responsible, and respectful by practicing these four rules:

1. Listening Ears
2. Quiet Voices
3. Walking Feet
4. Friendly Hands

Closing Procedures

Our school closes promptly at 5:30pm every evening. If your child is not picked up and signed out by 5:30 PM you will be charged \$1.00 per minute for every minute thereafter. This charge will automatically be added to your monthly after-care bill.

Daily Schedule

Each classroom's daily schedule is posted in the classroom and in your child's agenda.

Dismissal Procedures during school hours

A child will not be dismissed from the classroom unless they are checked-out properly through the main office and then handed directly to the parent/or other authorized pick-up person.

We ask that all parents or guardians, and anyone on your child's pick-up list to have their identification ready for inspection at all times. Only the people you have listed on your child's emergency contact information sheet with pick-up privileges will be allowed to remove your child(ren) from campus providing they have adequate identification. Please consider wisely the people you list in this area. Any changes need to be made in person by the enrolling parent. Any person sent to pick-up your child that is not on the enrollment paperwork will not be allowed to receive your child until we have contacted a parent or guardian for authorization. Relatives and people on the contact list other than a parent or guardian can not authorize a pick-up by someone else.

If a parent or guardian cannot be reached for authorization, the child will remain in the preschool's care until closing. All usual tuition rates for aftercare services will apply. If the child is not picked-up or authorization has not been granted after the preschool's standard hours of operation, Berkley Charter School Preschool is obligated to call the proper authorities and may include the Polk County Sheriff's Department and/or DCF.

Please note: The preschool has a right to contact the parent or guardian at any time to verify dismissal arrangements.

Dispensing of Medication

Berkley Charter School Preschool will not dispense any medication to a student unless ALL of the following requirements are met:

- Parent or guardian must complete an Authorization for Medication/Treatment form. This form can be found online at <https://berkleyknights.net/forms-policies/>.
- Medication must be in original containers with date, child's name, physician's name, and directions for use clearly visible.
- Medication must be handed directly to the clinic staff member, along with authorization form. DO NOT put medication in children's lunch boxes or back packs.

Discipline Policy

Berkley Charter Preschool Staff believe that basic principles are essential in providing children with a well-balanced base for their future growth. We believe that children learn what is right and wrong from positive guidance and praise.

Should a child disturb other children in a way that prevents learning to take place, the Teacher will use "redirection techniques" such as "Stop and Think". It is sometimes necessary if a behavior becomes severe, aggressive, or endangers others to remove the child from class. If this occurs, the following procedures will take place:

- Child may be brought to the main office for some quiet time to gather him/herself.
- A note will go home to the parent explaining the day.
- If behaviors continue, a conference will be scheduled between the parent, teacher, and preschool administration. A plan of action will be agreed upon, listing actions that need to be taken by the preschool, parent, and student in order to resolve the behavior issue. A probation period will follow.
- If there are any infringements, or the plan of action is broken, school privileges can be revoked.

We believe that it is important for both the school and family to work as a team whenever a behavioral issue is present. If there is ever a time when you feel as though a conference may be necessary, speak with your teacher directly. She will contact administration, and a time will be set aside to discuss your concerns. If you feel a matter needs immediate attention, call us or stop in the office, as we will be more than happy to speak with you and address any concerns.

Dress Code

Your child is not required to wear the Berkley t-shirts. However, they are available for purchase if you choose in the front office. For your child's safety, **closed toe shoes** are required to be worn daily. If your child does not know how to tie their shoes, we kindly ask you do not send them to school with lace-up tennis shoes. Please send your child to school in bottoms they are able to undo/button on their own. Also, keep a change of clothes in your child's back pack or cubby in case of an emergency. Be mindful of the day's weather forecast and dress your child accordingly.

Drop-off/ Pick-up

Hours of PreK: 7:50am-3:00pm (VPK hours are 8-11:15 am for full day, 7:45-11:00am or 11:45-3:00pm for half day)

Your child should be dropped off in your child's classroom between 7:30 – 7:50 AM. Please park in the front parking lot or the side parking spaces (on the south side of campus; alongside Berkley Knights Drive). Do not park in the back employee parking lot to drop off/pick up your child. The only time the back employee parking lot may be utilized is after 3:15 PM for parents picking up for after care.

Pick-up is at 3:00 PM. If your child is not signed out by 3:15 PM, your child will be taken to aftercare, and daily aftercare charges will apply. This charge will automatically be added to your monthly aftercare bill.

Emergency Procedures

We practice several drills during the school year. This is a way for our staff and students to be more prepared in the event of an emergency. Some of these drills include:

Fire Drill/Evacuation

Teachers are to immediately follow the exit path as displayed by each room's entrance. Each teacher/staff member is responsible to have an accurate count of the number of children in their care and upon reaching the predestinated safety area outside. They are to immediately count and verify each child is present. Re-enter the building only when given the okay by emergency personnel or preschool director.

Lockdown

To ensure the safety of all children and staff in the event of a potential treat, lockdown drills are practiced regularly with representatives of the Polk County Sherriff's Office and Office of Safe Schools.

Severe/Inclement Weather

In the event of severe or inclement weather, such as a tornado watch, students who are located in portable classrooms will be moved to a classroom located in the main building. In the event of a tornado warning, students should already have been moved to a main building classroom, and then the children will sit with their heads between their knees until the warning has been lifted.

Please note: At no time will a child be released from the preschool while a drill, warning, or alert is in progress.

Hurricanes

In the event of a hurricane **watch**, parents are advised to repeatedly check for updates in the event that the "watch" becomes a "warning" and have a plan for the pick-up of their children if needed. Classes will continue as long as a warning is not posted.

The preschool will be closed if a hurricane **warning** is issued for Polk County. If the warning is posted during preschool or aftercare hours, parents are to immediately pick up their children. Our classrooms are not designated safety shelters. Parents will be contacted repeatedly until their child is released from our care. The preschool will remain closed until the warning is lifted from our area.

For information on school closings please refer to Polk County Public Schools. Berkley Charter Preschool follows the Polk County Public School procedures. If they are closed, we are closed.

Enrollment Procedures

The following forms must be filled out upon registration of your child within the preschool:

- Student Enrollment Form
- Financial Agreement
- Parent/Preschool Responsibilities Form
- Discipline Policy Agreement Form
- Illness and Attendance Policy Agreement Form
- VPK Attendance Procedures (for prek4 class)
- Student Medical History Packet
- Child Care Program Meal Application

First Aid

Our staff members and teachers have obtained certification in both CPR and First Aid. In the event that a serious injury occurs, our staff members have been trained on how to handle the situation until help arrives. The parent will be contacted by either the agenda or calling by telephone depending on the seriousness of the injury. If the parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. It is **extremely important** that you keep our school files updated with a current contact information and medical information pertaining to doctor, hospital, and any existing medical conditions.

Floral/Celebration Delivery Policy

We will only accept deliveries of school related items such as books, lunch boxes, etc from parents/guardians that are listed on the student's emergency card. Gifts, flowers, balloons, etc for students may not be delivered or brought to the school. Balloon arrangements, bouquets, and other celebration deliveries for students are considered an educational distraction in the classroom and a safety issue in the hallways, cafeteria. It is not appropriate for the school to be responsible for delivery of non-school related articles to students.

Illness Policy

In order to help keep all of the children and teachers in a healthy environment, we require that you DO NOT bring your child to school if they are exhibiting any of the following:

- Vomiting or Diarrhea (within the past 24 hours)
- Fever of 100°F or higher (within the past 24 hours - *students need to be medicine-free for 24 hours*)
- Yellow or Green Discharge from the nose (without doctor consultation).
- Rash or Impetigo
- Deep or Hacking Cough
- Head lice (nits or bugs)
- Chicken Pox or any other contagious disease

- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- All open sores must be covered at all times

If your child is sent to school with any of the above symptoms, they will be sent home. This policy is imperative for minimizing the spread of disease within the school. By limiting the amount of sickness, we can ensure that absences are kept to a minimum. We appreciate your cooperation in remaining compliant with this policy, and in your efforts to keep our school healthy and safe. Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact administration for further clarification.

Immunization Requirements

The Florida State Department of Environmental Health requires that all students in attendance have current and updated Blue and Yellow Immunization and Health Record Forms on file at all times.

Lunch

Full day prek students are provided a free, well-balanced lunch from the cafeteria. All meals served are in accordance with requirements of the USDA Child Care Food Program. A menu will be posted in the classroom and on our website: <https://berkleyknights.net/cafe/>. Your child may bring a packed lunch from home, if preferred. Please keep healthy, nutritional choices in mind when packing your child's lunch.

Nap/Rest-time Procedures

Every afternoon between the hours of 1:00-2:30 PM, our full day students have a rest period. Each child will have a small cot, but you will need to provide the school with a pillow, blanket, and/or snuggly your child uses for naptime (please do not send in play toys for nap/rest time). Please put your child's name on each of these items, and store them in a bag labeled with your child's name. Every Friday, please make sure you bring your child's blanket and pillow home for cleaning. You may return them on Monday. Please avoid checking out your child during these times.

Potty Training

All students are to be fully potty trained. Your child needs to be able to properly care for themselves when it comes to using the restroom. Your child must also be potty trained for sleeping through naptime.

Security

We welcome parents/guardians of our students to visit our preschool anytime to have the opportunity to observe the classroom programs and to see the facilities, activities, and equipment that are available to the children. All volunteers must bring a valid driver's license to the front office before entering the campus. While on campus, all prek parents must wear a prek badge.

Sign-In Sign-Out

Students must be signed in and out daily. Sign-In and Sign-Out sheets will be provided for the parent/guardian or designee, in person or via the ProCare app. The person who picks up a student must be listed on the child's Emergency Card as eligible to pick up. No one under the age of 18 may sign a child in or out.

Snack

We have designated snack times each morning and afternoon. VPK classes will be provided a balanced snack in accordance to USDA Child Care Food Program standards. Snack menus are posted in the classroom. If your child has any food allergies, please notify the teacher.

Tuition

Monthly tuition payments are due by the first school day of the month, in the full amount. Weekly are due on Friday BEFORE the start of the week. There is no credit for sick or vacation days used by the student. A minimum of one week notice is required to withdraw a student from the program. Contract and tuition terms are valid for one school term only. All policies are subject to change with previous notice to parents. **Please note:** a \$40.00 fee will be added for all returned checks. Failure to keep your account up-to-date may result in dismissal of your child from our preschool program.

Water Bottles

We encourage children to stay hydrated. Water fountains and drinking water are accessible to students throughout the day. All water bottles or drinking cups brought from home must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name.

Wellness Policy

Berkley's School Wellness Policy can be found on our website at: <https://berkleyknights.net/cafe/>.