

# CHILDREN'S HOUSE PARENT HANDBOOK

## WELCOME TO THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE

The Children's House is a warm, inviting community where children and adults find friendships and opportunities for growth and learning.

We are a Montessori preschool and kindergarten that guides a diverse group of children to become joyful, lifelong learners who respect others. We view children as individuals whose physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs are of primary importance. We believe that children, who experience cultural diversity when they are young, grow to accept and cherish variety in others. We help each child develop positive self esteem by providing a nurturing, unbiased and accepting environment. Admission is open to children three and four years old. Five year old children are admitted only if they have previously attended a Montessori school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational and admission policies.

The curriculum is based on sound knowledge of child development and utilizes Montessori methods and materials which foster the development of independence, concentration, initiative, creativity, respect and a love of learning. The Montessori program is designed as a three year education program with children remaining in the same mixed age classroom from age three through the Kindergarten year. The school's respect for diversity and its concern for the safety and well being of the children is clearly reflected in the day to day activities.

The school is governed by a volunteer board. The board members are usually parents of children at the school and serve a three year term. Contact the school office for more information if interested in serving on the board.

The faculty members at The Children's House have been carefully selected based on educational background, educational philosophy, teaching skills and their ability to provide a warm, caring environment for young children. In addition to having earned college degrees, all of our teachers are certified Montessori teachers or will become certified to teach in a Montessori school within two years.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

For the safety of all of us, make sure the doors close securely and lock behind you when you leave the building. Never open the outside doors for a person to enter if person is unknown to you. Please advise person to ring the bell and we will respond from the office. Always latch the gate behind you when entering or leaving the playground area.

### School Day Arrival and Departure

- The school director will greet children at their cars in the driveway at the Clifton entrance from 8:20-8:40 each morning. The assistant director and kindergarten students are available to accompany children into their classrooms.
- Parents preferring to accompany a child into the building should park in a parking space off the driveway or in the Belmont Blvd. parking lot and enter through the Clifton Lane entrance. Please, **do not park on the street on Clifton**. Vehicles parked on the street limit visibility for those leaving our driveway and create a hazard for through traffic.
- To keep traffic running smoothly, remain in the vehicle, have all belongings packed in the Children's House bag. Messages for the classroom or office should be in writing and place in message bag.
- If arriving after 8:40, park in a parking space and escort child to classroom. (Children arriving late can miss special opportunities, have a difficult time getting started in the morning, have difficulty separating from parents, disrupt the classroom routine and learn that tardiness is acceptable. Please make every effort to be on time). (continued)

#### continued- School Day Arrival and Departure

- Departure times are 11:20-11:30 for part day children and 3:20-3:40 for full day children.
- A timely pick up is essential to others as well as to your child. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child will be charged for any child remaining after 11:30 or 3:40.
- Place the name card we provide prominently on your windshield when picking your child up each day. If you need additional name cards, notify the office.
- During dismissal, a faculty member will assist your child into the car from the driveway. Please remain in your vehicle when in the hookup line. After your child is placed in the vehicle, move forward in the car line to buckle car seats.
- If you prefer, you may park in marked parking space or in the Belmont Blvd. parking lot and walk onto the playground through the wooden gate. **Please do not park on Clifton Lane.**
- We will release your child only to those persons whom you have authorized on your pick up list on the student information form, or to a person whom you authorize on a specific occasion. Please send a signed, dated note if someone other than a parent will be picking up your child. When one parent has custody of the child, we will follow the requirements of the legal and binding court document regarding parent visitation during school hours and pick up. We will ask for identification from any person whom we do not know, including parents. Please inform them that we may do so.
- We will never release a child to anyone (including parents) whose behavior may place the child in immediate risk (such as intoxication). In this event we will contact parents or another responsible person whom the parents have indicated on student information form.
- A car seat must be available for each child that we place into a vehicle.

#### Extended Day (before and after care) Arrival and Departure

Extended care for both morning and afternoon, is available on a regular or drop in basis. Child care is available on days when school is closed for Parent and Teacher conferences two times per year.

- Morning extended care begins at 7:30. Parents should escort children into the school through the Clifton Lane entrance. Please sign the attendance book and make sure a faculty member is aware of your child's presence.
- Afternoon extended care ends at 5:30 pm. Children may be picked up from the playground or from the multi-purpose room downstairs. Again, please sign the attendance book indicating the time you pick up your child and be sure a faculty member is aware you are taking your child.
- A late fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child will be charged for any child remaining after 5:30. (Habitual late pick up may result in removal from aftercare service.)

#### CLOTHING

We are an active group. Daily experiences may allow your child's clothing to come into contact with juice, mud, sand, paint, glue and water. While we will make efforts to protect clothing during activities, our focus is on hands-on-learning and experimentation. We strongly recommend that children wear sturdy, washable, play clothes to school.

- **Label everything!!!** Many items of clothing look similar and children don't always recognize their own sweaters, mittens, boots etc... (continued)

#### Continued- Clothing

- **Clothing should be easily managed by children** so that they can begin to be independent. Elastic waists, large buttons, velcro shoes for those who can't yet tie are some examples of easily managed clothing.
- Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate for outside play. Sneakers help the child move gracefully and quietly in the classroom and provide secure footing on the playground. Boots, sandals, clogs, and dress shoes are not recommended.
- Avoid unnecessary belts, hats, bows & jewelry. They get misplaced easily.
- **Children will go outside everyday** so dress appropriately for the weather. Please send mittens, hats, coats that close and long pants for cold weather. Send boots and raincoats for warm, slightly wet days.
- **Each child needs a complete change of labeled clothing**, including underwear, socks, shirt and pants, that will remain at school. This is for possible water spills, bathroom accidents or whatever may require a change of clothing. Make sure that clothing is replaced when used, fits your child, and is appropriate as the weather changes. It is important that children feel comfortable if they need to change. Not having an appropriate change of clothes can turn a small accident into an emotional catastrophe.

#### DISCIPLINE POLICY

In a Montessori classroom there is always movement, talking and constant use of materials. All activities are guided by respect for teacher and peers, respect for the work of others and respect for the materials. Teachers devote much time to building a respectful, cooperative community in their classrooms. We are happy to share our positive discipline techniques with parents. Just call the office to schedule a time to discuss this topic with the school director or a teacher.

- Discipline is guidance. We respectfully teach children how we want them to act and speak. We do not assume that they already know this, especially if they are new to the school. We expect our second and third year students to serve as positive role models to first year students. Children are taught how to follow a few simple classroom rules such as (the language may vary slightly by classroom) Walk; Talk softly; Be kind.
- Corporal punishment and/or humiliation are never used.
- Children are taught how to use words to solve problems and avoid conflicts. They are also taught how to get help from an adult if words aren't working.
- If a child is disturbing others, harming equipment or otherwise behaving inappropriately, a teacher will speak to the child and usually redirect the child to an activity that more fully absorbs attention.
- If a child is out of control, as a last resort, the child may be removed from the activity to regain control. Children are always supervised.
- The Children's House reserves the right to request a child's withdrawal if inappropriate behavior requires so much supervision that the whole group is unfavorably affected.

#### FOOD AND NUTRITION

- A nutritious breakfast at home is important for each child to have a healthy start to the school day. Foods low in sugar and high in whole grains and protein are most appropriate.
- Parents and grandparents are always welcome to join us for lunch. Let us know your plans in advance so that we can welcome you properly and make room at the table. (continued)

#### Continued- Food and Nutrition

- Children are offered nutritious morning and afternoon snacks. Children in extended care are offered a late afternoon snack. Snacks are prepared from the following or similar foods; a variety of whole grain crackers, cereals and breads, cheeses, fruits, 100% fruit juices, organic milk, peanut butter and popcorn.
- Full day children bring a lunch from home. Our regulatory agency requires that the lunch meal include a protein source, 2 servings of fruits/vegetables, bread product and milk or water. Avoid sweetened drinks, carbonated drinks and refined sugar snacks. Avoid foods that encourage poor table manners and playing with food such as lunchables, gogurt, fruit roll ups. We know that they are convenient and children love them, but they have little nutritional value and children often just play with the food rather than eat it.
- All children need a lunch box and unbreakable thermos. All lunch equipment should be clearly labeled with child's name, simple enough for children to open independently and small enough to fit within the provided Children's House canvas bag. We cannot refrigerate or heat individual lunches. We recommend using a frozen "blue ice" pack to keep perishables cold and a thermos to keep foods hot or cold.
- When preparing snacks for special days or birthdays please provide nutritious foods such as fresh strawberries, pineapple, cheeses and crackers, unfrosted cookies and muffins made with whole grains and high in nutritional value. Please avoid items with little or no nutritional value. We will provide a written list of suggested food items when school begins. Let the teachers know in advance if you plan to bring special treats to the class.

#### HEALTH POLICY (WHEN YOUR CHILD IS SICK)

- If any of the following signs of illness are exhibited, please be considerate of your child and the other children and teachers in the classroom by notifying the office and keeping your child out of school.
  - temperature at or above 100° - MUST be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.
  - lethargic behavior or unusual sleepiness
  - undiagnosed skin rash
  - persistent cough
  - excessive sneezing or severe runny nose
  - diarrhea or vomiting
  - lice infestation
  - inflammation of eyes/discharge from eyes
- Notify the office of contagious illnesses, incidence of lice or other conditions so that other families may be notified. Your child will not be identified when notice is made.
- If your child becomes sick at school, we will contact you immediately. If you cannot be reached, the person you have indicated on your emergency list will be contacted to pick up your child. **Make sure you list only a local person who will be able to pick up a sick child in an emergency.**
- Please allow your child to return to school only when able to participate in group activities, including outside play. Our school program is designed to provide a high quality "group" experience. We are unable to provide one to one care for a child recovering from illness.

#### MEDICINE AT SCHOOL

- Medications, including prescription and non prescription drugs, cough drops, vitamins and salves or lotions, must be directly handed by the parent to a faculty member. Never send medication with children in lunch boxes or message bags. Medication will be administered at school under the following conditions.
  - Medicine must be in the original container with the child's name on the container. Include an accurate measuring device for liquids(can be purchased from pharmacy). (continued)

#### Continued- Medicine at School

- A medication form, available from the school office or downloaded from our website must be completed and attached to the container or enclosed with medication container in a zip lock bag. If medicine is to be given over several days only one form is necessary when the duration is indicated on medication form.

## HOLIDAYS & SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS AT SCHOOL

Since ours is a diverse student body, we encourage parents to make intentional efforts to include all children as they choose books, party favors, valentines etc. for school friends. Avoid stereotyping books and pictures. Animal decorations on cards and party favors are generally acceptable to everyone. Many bookstores can provide assistance in selecting non-stereotyping children's books, cards, invitations, etc...

- Special Day- Every child celebrates a "special day" at school each year. A special day is sometimes planned close to the child's birthday, but not necessarily. Family members are invited to share in the special day activities and to share very brief stories about the child. Teachers will let you know more about special day when the time arrives. Each classroom has traditions that are followed. Parents prepare a healthy (see food and nutrition section) special day snack for the group and it has long been a tradition for children to choose a book, CD or tape for the school library on special day. This is not required, but if you wish to do so, it will be a welcome addition to the festivities.
- Holidays and other celebrations- Holiday parties traditionally are very low profile at the school. We welcome your participation as you share your family's traditions with the class. Parents are usually asked to provide special foods for holiday celebrations. We welcome your suggestions about any cultural and ethnic observances in which the students might participate with your assistance.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND FUNDRAISING

This school recognizes that parents are the principle influence in their children's lives. We welcome and expect parent involvement for the successful operation of this school. We also recognize the many demands that are placed on families' time and therefore, offer varied level of involvement opportunities. We expect that each family will be involved in our fundraising events and in the life of the school in some of the following ways.

- driving for field trips
- supervising nap room during staff meeting
- attending parent meetings
- attending social events
- volunteering in the classroom or making classroom materials
- chairing or serving on a fundraising committee
- serving on the governing board or a committee of the board
- **Parents, grandparents, faculty, friends and alumni are asked to participate in the annual *House Fund*. Each current family is expected to contribute to this fund drive each year. Our goal is 100% participation.** Donations allow the school to continue its history of excellence and to build upon what others before us have made possible to today's families. Funds are used to enhance the school in ways that make a significant impact in our programming and in facility improvements.
- **The Winter Bazaar** is an event for the whole family that occurs on the first Saturday in December each year. Many volunteers are needed to facilitate the success of this fun family occasion. **Each family is expected to participate in the bazaar** by donating time and/ or goods, by serving on a committee and/or staffing an activity on event day for at least one hour. Winter Bazaar includes a bake sale, Christmas tree and greens sale, children's game area, lunch and "children's only" gift shopping area.
- **The annual Spring Auction supports Children's House tuition scholarships.** This is an adult only party and is looked forward to each year with great anticipation. The auction is in early May and needs many volunteers to reach its goals. The auction committee will ask for others to help with the planning.

Additionally, **each family is expected to provide at least one item or service which can be auctioned.** Area businesses have been very supportive of our annual auction and our families are exceptionally creative in designing their own "auction items".

## REST TIME

- All full day children nap or rest after lunch. Children are not required to sleep, but must rest quietly. Children enjoy a wide range of story records, songs and music during rest time. Children can bring a small, soft, stuffed animal or pillow to sleep with if needed. It should be something that can be left at school. If the security item must go home each day, make sure it is labeled with the child's name and that the classroom teachers are notified in writing that it returns home each day.
- We need volunteers to supervise children during nap time one or two afternoons per month throughout the school year so that all teachers can attend faculty meetings. Call the office for more information.

## BRINGING THINGS FROM HOME

- We ask that children leave toys, money, jewelry, pets and toy weapons at home. When children bring an item from home, they often spend much of their day showing it to others or protecting it from others. If in doubt, ask the teachers. The following list describes OK items to bring to school.
  - Books, items from nature, and other items that enrich the curriculum or unit of study are always welcome at school Check with the teachers before sending "live items." Use only plastic containers for transporting. NO GLASS.
  - A security item such as a small, soft, stuffed animal or a special pillow or blanket for rest time is welcome. Let the teachers know, in writing, if it must come home each day.
- Inform teachers in writing of any lost items. Labeled items almost always find their way home.
- If something comes home that does not belong, please check with the teachers. We have many pieces of equipment that include small objects and activities are not complete without them. If you find such objects in pockets or lunch boxes, please do not be embarrassed or scold or punish your child. Call us and together we can help the child understand that school materials belong at school.

## COMMUNICATION / VISITING IN THE CLASSROOM

615-298-5647 (office phone)

615-974-8792 (cell phone for use after office hours)

[www.childrenshousenashville.org](http://www.childrenshousenashville.org)

[office@childrenshousenashville.org](mailto:office@childrenshousenashville.org) (office E-mail)

[cra@childrenshousenashville.org](mailto:cra@childrenshousenashville.org) (Classroom A teachers E-Mail)

[crb@childrenshousenashville.org](mailto:crb@childrenshousenashville.org) (Classroom B teachers E-Mail)

[crc@childrenshousenashville.org](mailto:crc@childrenshousenashville.org) (Classroom C teachers E-Mail)

[kindergarten@childrenshousenashville.org](mailto:kindergarten@childrenshousenashville.org) (K-club teachers E-Mail)

Teachers check E-mail two times per day when they are able to get away from the classroom. **Do not use the classroom E-mail addresses to deliver time-sensitive information.** Call the office number to provide time-sensitive information such as day to day changes in pick up information or after care enrollment.

- Parents are welcome at all times. When one parent has custody of the child, we will follow the requirements of the legal and binding court document regarding parent visitation during school hours. We will ask for identification from any person whom we do not know, including parents. Please inform them that we may do so. Observation in the classroom is an effective way to find out what happens at school. We encourage you to visit as often as possible, at least once each semester. We prefer to limit visitors to one at a time in each classroom, so if possible, please call in advance to let us know you are coming. (continued)

#### Continued- Communication

- We ask that visitors participate in our classroom environment as the children do by using quiet voices while inside, putting work on a rug or a table, and not interrupting the work of others. Teachers are usually not available to engage in conversations with you during your visit, but will be happy to talk with you after school or by phone to discuss your observations.
- Conferences between parents and teachers are scheduled in the fall and spring. If at any time you wish for an additional conference, call or E-mail the school office, send a note in the message bag or E-mail the classroom.
- Teachers' home phone numbers are provided in the directory. **Please respect the teachers' privacy and use this only in circumstances when you must speak to a teacher immediately.** If the conversation can wait until the next day, write a note asking the teacher to call, send an E-mail or leave a message by phone in the school office. A teacher will respond as soon as classroom responsibilities permit.
- *News From the Office* will be communicated by E-mail during the year. Classroom newsletters will be sent via E-mail each month. Please make sure that we have your correct E-mail address and be sure to add our E-mail addresses (above) to your address book to assure prompt receipt.
- Changes in a child's routine can have significant effects on classroom behavior. **Always let the classroom teachers know when a parent will be out of town, about changes in family structure, family illnesses, significant visitors such as grandparents and so forth.** If we know what is going on in the child's life we will be able to respond appropriately to the situation.
- Notify the office of address, phone and E-mail address changes so that emergency calls and written communication can reach you immediately. Changes are made in the family directory posted on our website in the private content area of the Student and Family section. Contact the office for the log in information.
- The school message bags are for communication between the school and home. **Do not use the message bags to deliver party invitations to children** or other personal messages to other families.
- Let us hear from you. Tell us if you need or want additional information about your child. We want you to know that you are always welcome and your comments are appreciated.

#### SNOW DAY CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- We make our own decisions about closing for inclement weather. Assuming we have electricity, you will receive an announcement via E-mail if school will be closed. An announcement will also be on the school answering machine (if electricity is not affected) and on TV Channels 2, 4, 5 & 17. Feel free to keep your child at home anytime road conditions on your travel route are unsafe. If we are open our regular schedule there will be no TV or radio announcement.

Call 298-5647 for the answering machine school closing message. If you hear a fax tone, hang up and call again. The primary line, with the answering machine, may be busy.

#### TUITION /EXTENDED CARE PAYMENTS

- Tuition policies are stated in your Enrollment Agreement. Please ask for a copy if yours is not available.
- Payments for tuition and all fees will be made by ACH (auto debit) and will be initiated by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month. For those choosing not to participate in auto debit, an administrative fee of \$100 per child will be assessed.
- An invoice will be E-mailed to the address you provide near the 15th of each month. Payment is due regardless of receipt of invoice. If you have any question about any charges, contact the office

immediately. If payment is not received within 10 days of the due date, a penalty of \$25 will be assessed and 1 % interest will be charged on all past due amounts, retroactive to the first day of the month.

- If you require a receipt to verify payments, please enclose a form with your payment or request one from the school office. We will be happy to complete it and return it to you.
- Need based financial assistance for tuition is available. Application must be made by February 15<sup>th</sup> for the next school year. Apply confidentially online at [www.sss.nais.org](http://www.sss.nais.org) or contact the school director for more information.