



PARENT HANDBOOK 2018-19

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WELCOME TO THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE

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

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.

History

The Children's House was founded in 1973 by a group of Nashville parents seeking a quality early educational experience for their own young children. These parents embraced the Montessori philosophy of following the child's interests, observing to determine growth and needs, encouraging independence and respectfully guiding each child to reach full potential in a carefully prepared environment. The Children's House opened in 1973 with one class of 30 children.

Our dedication to the success of every student has enabled the Children's House to grow. We now serve 72 children in three classrooms, appointed with a wide range of Montessori materials. Our buildings and campus include an art studio, dedicated space for before school and after school childcare, adult meeting rooms, volunteer work areas, beautiful gardens and outdoor play and learning spaces.

Over the past 40 years, parents, faculty, board and community members have generously supported Children's House and its improvements so that our school is debt free. Our founders and those who have followed created a legacy of leaving the school better than they found it.

Located in the Green Hills/Belmont area of Nashville, Children's House offers Montessori early childhood and Kindergarten opportunities to children ages 3-6. Children's House ensures a smoke free environment campus-wide.

Our Mission

The Children's House is a Montessori preschool and kindergarten that guides a diverse group of children to become joyful and confident lifelong learners who respect others and the world around them.

Our Vision

Children's House students are extraordinary citizens: independent, responsible, unique and confident in their abilities to influence their world.

What We Believe

- Respect for each child's uniqueness builds trust and allows the child to learn and grow.
- Young children learn best and develop independence by being actively involved in our enriched learning environment.
- Children who experience diversity when they are young will grow to accept and cherish differences in others and themselves.
- Children in multi-age groups help each other learn.
- Joyful learners become lifelong learners.

ADMISSIONS AND WITHDRAWAL

Admission Policy

The admission policy of Children's House gives equal consideration to all children, regardless of race, color, creed, sex, religious denomination or national origin. Montessori education is an approach to learning with no distinction of class, culture, or intelligence.

Furthermore, we are committed to creating classrooms that reflect the Nashville community at large with a diverse mix of students balanced by age and gender. We believe that children who experience diversity when they are young will grow to accept and cherish differences in others. Considerations for enrollment include date of application and child's readiness, including independent toileting skills. We seek families who are committed to the Montessori philosophy and committed to supporting the Children's House in its educational programs and annual fundraising efforts.

Limited tuition assistance is available to qualifying families. We practice a "need blind" admission policy meaning a request for tuition assistance does not influence the admission decision. See our [tuition page](#) for more information about submitting a confidential application for tuition assistance.

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.

Applications are accepted any time after your child's birth. The application date is only one of several factors considered during our admission process. Admission decisions for fall enrollment are made each year in early March. Priority is given to siblings and legacies with applications on file by January 1 of the enrollment year.

Additionally, as we fill our classrooms each year we attempt to balance age and gender within each group. We enroll children who are **three or four years old** and as space permits, children who are **five years old** by **August 15th**. We give preference to those 5s who have previously attended a Montessori school. *For children three (3) years through pre-kindergarten if the Director finds through our Assessment for Readiness, at the request of the parent or legal guardian, that a child who has a birthdate from August 16 – September 30 and is sufficiently mature emotionally and academically, then the child may be permitted to enter such classroom.

Our program is a 5-day-a-week program with full day and part day enrollment options. If you have any further questions about any part of our admissions process, please contact us at (615) 298-5647 or office@childrenshousenashville.org

Withdrawal Policy

The Children's House has a withdrawal policy that is included in the "Enrollment Agreement." If you have any questions about this policy, or if you have any special circumstances that are not addressed in the policy, please feel free to discuss your concerns with the Executive Director. (See the Discipline Policy section of this Handbook for other dismissal circumstances.)

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

For the safety of all, please 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 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 Lane.** 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, and 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).

- 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. After your child is placed in the vehicle, turn the engine off and buckle child in appropriate safety restraint.
- 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 the street 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 offered on a regular or drop in basis if space is available. Child care is also offered on days when school is closed for Parent and Teacher conferences two times per year. Call the office, in advance, to check on availability and to schedule drop in care.

- Morning extended care begins at **7:30 am**. 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...
- **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 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 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.
- 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, 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. **All lunch equipment should be clearly labeled with child's name and any food allergies.** In addition, be sure lunch box/containers are simple enough for children to open independently and small enough to fit within the provided Children's House canvas bag. We are unable to 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 which are high in nutritional value such as fresh strawberries, pineapple, cheeses and crackers, unfrosted cookies and muffins made with whole grains. 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 anytime during the year.

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 (can return after treatment and nits and lice are removed)
 - 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).
 - 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 should 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, or CD 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 for our kindergarteners
- supervising nap room during staff meeting
- attending parent meetings
- attending social events
- volunteering in the classroom, outdoor education class or making classroom materials
- chairing or serving on a fundraising committee
- serving on the governing board or a committee of the board

House Fund

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.

Winter Bazaar

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 Winter 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 often includes a bake sale, adult beverages, game areas, food sales and a special "children's only" gift shopping area.

Monte-Soiree

The annual Spring Auction supports Children's House tuition assistance program. This is an adult only party and is looked forward to each year with great anticipation. The auction is in the late spring and needs many volunteers to reach its goals. The auction committee will ask for others to help with the planning.

Additionally, our families are asked to participate in securing items or services 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".

Community Building & Off-Campus Events

From time to time, the Children's House may alert families of opportunities to gather with other families from the Children's House. These off-campus events may be held at parks, restaurants or other locations. While these events can be important to community building, please keep in mind that these events are not sponsored by the Children's House and as such, the Children's House accepts no responsibility for the safety or well-being of anyone in attendance. Parents must accompany children and other guests at all times. Parents are solely responsible for their children and other guests while attending this type of event. No childcare will be provided. To the extent that staff or Board members from The Children's House are in attendance, they are there in a social capacity only and are not there to provide any child supervision.

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 Thursday afternoons per month throughout the school year so that all teachers can attend faculty meetings. Call office for 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, or protecting it from, others. If in doubt, ask the teachers. OK items to bring to school are;
 - Books, items from nature, and other items that enrich the curriculum or unit of study. 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. 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

Teachers check E-mail two times per day when they are able to get away from the classroom. So, call the office number to provide time-sensitive information such as day to day changes in pick up information or after care enrollment. **Do not use the classroom E-mail system to deliver time-sensitive information** - Call the office **615-298-5647**

Office

www.childrenshousenashville.org

office@childrenshousenashville.org

rhonda.mckay@childrenshousenashville.org

sandra.mason@childrenshousenashville.org

Classrooms

classroom.A@childrenshousenashville.org

classroom.B@childrenshousenashville.org

classroom.C@childrenshousenashville.org

kindergarten.club@childrenshousenashville.org

VISITING IN THE CLASSROOM

- Parents are welcome at all times. 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. 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 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, contact the school office or classroom teachers.
- To communicate with teachers, you may write a note asking the teacher to call, send an E-mail at address listed above 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 communications will be sent frequently. Please make sure that we have your correct E-mail address.

- 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 password protected "Our Families" section on the Community tab. Contact the office for the log in information.
- The school message bags are for communication between the school and home. **Please, 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. You are always welcome, and your comments are appreciated.

INCLEMENT WEATHER AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

We make our own decisions about closing for inclement weather. **Announcements will be made via E-mail to the address you have provided, on our website calendar www.childrenshousenashville.org and local news stations.** Of course, you may always choose to keep your child at home when road conditions on your travel route are unsafe or if you just want to enjoy the day.

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 fees will be made by ACH (auto debit) and will be initiated by the 5th day of the month.
- 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 and Parent Financial Statement must be submitted by February 1st for the following school year. Apply confidentially online at www.sss.nais.org or contact the school director for more information.

GIFT POLICY

Many parents look for ways to personally thank those who work with their children every day. Written expressions of gratitude are always appreciated and treasured by faculty and staff. Individuals may always be acknowledged through a named donation to the school's House Fund, Winter Bazaar and Monte-Soiree. Those who prefer to give a gift are asked to abide by our gift policy which is based on the federal government's gift policy. It allows us to avoid a conflict of interest, the appearance of a conflict of interest and the need for our employees to examine the ethics of acceptance. This policy is outlined here:

- A faculty or staff member may not accept a cash gift or a gift card that can be exchanged for cash
- A faculty or staff member may accept a non-cash gift from a source as long as it is not valued at more than \$20. The same employee may accept other gifts throughout the school year from that particular source as long as the combined sum does not exceed \$50.