



*Children's Own School*  
**Parent Handbook**

**781-729-2689**

# Welcome

Welcome to the new school year and the current edition of the Children's Own School *Parent Handbook*. We hope you will find it both useful and accessible. This handbook is comprised of two parts:

**Part I contains information about the policies and procedures of the school.** We invite you to familiarize yourself with its contents and to use it as a reference tool for day-to-day life at Children's Own School. If you have questions, please ask. If you have suggestions, we welcome them.

**Part II is a guide to support parents in their understanding of Montessori education.** When parents choose Children's Own School for their children, they are asked to make continuing efforts both to understand and embrace the Montessori approach and to work in partnership with the school. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.

The handbook opens with the *Partnership Agreement*. Please take a few minutes to read it. It responds to two questions: *What can you expect of Children's Own School?* and *What will Children's Own School expect of you?* We encourage you to read the Partnership Agreement. If you have questions about what it says or what it means, please ask the school's director.

We welcome you and your children to a year of growth and discovery.

# *Parent Handbook*

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# Partnership Agreement

At Children's Own School we are dedicated to pursuing a Montessori educational experience as defined by the *Association Montessori Internationale*. We understand that parents who pursue a Montessori education for their child are also committed to this goal. Our hope is that this partnership will provide grounds for mutual understanding and open communication so we can all work together for the benefit of your child.

## *As a parent, you can expect Children's Own School to:*

- Honor the school's mission and cultivate a mutually respectful relationship with all members of our community;
- Maintain a prepared Montessori environment that meets the highest standards of excellence in faculty and materials;
- Promote understanding of Montessori philosophy through a program of parent education;
- Provide opportunities for families to build relationships in the community through volunteerism and social events;
- Communicate in a clear and concise manner;
- Understand the challenges of parenting and support you in meeting those challenges.

## *At Children's Own School, parents are expected to:*

- Honor the school's mission and cultivate a mutually respectful relationship with all members of our community;
- Educate themselves concerning the policies and procedures governing COS set forth in the school's Parent Handbook;
- Promote good communication by attending parent-teacher conferences, staying informed about school functions through reading all newsletters, news briefs, and other communications;
- Understand that the expectation is for children to complete the full developmental program in which they are enrolled;
- Grow in understanding of the Montessori method by attending parent education presentations;
- Observe your child's classroom at least once per year; and
- Provide opportunity for purposeful activity at home that compliments the child's experience at school and limit the use of television, video and computer games.

# Our School

## **Mission**

The mission of Children's Own School is to employ the philosophy and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori to educate young people to be successful and valued members of the community, to enable them to develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning, and to instill in them a deep sense of care of self, care of others, and care of the school environment.

## **Diversity Statement**

The goal of Children's Own School is to build and maintain a welcoming and inspiring environment in which children of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and interests can develop and learn. Our firm commitment to racial, cultural, and economic pluralism is essential to our success as a school. Our children, families, faculty, and broader community reflect diversity: we are of assorted races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. We have a range of family structures, beliefs, and physical abilities as well as learning styles.

## **Governance**

Children's Own School is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and managed by a Board of Directors. The Board upholds policies that govern the school and engages in strategic planning for the future success of COS. The Board establishes the school's mission, keeps and passes by-laws, determines tuition, and makes major financial and policy decisions. The Board oversees the finances of the Corporation and has all the powers of the Corporation. The Board is responsible for appointing, supporting, and supervising the Director. The Board generally meets monthly when school is in session.

## **Parent Volunteers**

The Parent Committee organizes and hosts special events throughout the year. The Parent Committee plans morning coffees, social gatherings, and annual events. Each classroom has a class parent who supports teachers by facilitating communication between the classroom and families. They keep parents informed of upcoming events, organize food for events, and coordinate classroom contributions for teacher gifts throughout the year. The class parents are responsible for the weekly rotation of snack and fresh flowers, a role handled mainly by phone and email.

## **Teaching Teams**

The classroom teaching teams are comprised of two highly experienced and uniquely talented individuals who are dedicated to the Montessori principles of early childhood development. Our teachers support young children's natural curiosity by preparing indoor and outdoor environments that encourage the development of practical life, sensorial, language, and mathematical skills. All our teachers are certified in Infant, Child, and Adult First Aid and CPR.

Our master teachers are certified Montessori professionals (*guides* in Montessori parlance). They respect children as individuals and create a calm and joyful atmosphere. They prepare an environment that allows each child to connect to productive work by giving appropriate presentations with Montessori materials. Once introduced, the children will work with the materials independently. The guides are available to assist the children as they progress towards independence and develop concentration. Our guides also communicate with parents, write reports, and conduct conferences.

Classroom assistants work with the Montessori guide to prepare and maintain an orderly, attractive, and joyful environment. They provide another pair of observant eyes and ears. Classroom assistants are also crucial in modeling courteous and respectful behavior, as well as contributing to the warm, supportive, and calm atmosphere that is the hallmark of Montessori classrooms and our school.

### **Administrative Team**

The Director works with teachers and parents to provide a program that embodies the school's philosophy and mission, promotes the strength of a positive community, and strives to improve the financial and physical conditions of the school. The Director also manages daily administration and supervises the faculty.

The Office Manager coordinates with the entire school community to help daily operations runs smoothly. The Office Manager is responsible for tuition invoicing, payroll and benefits, accounts payable, cash flow, and the school's financial systems. The Office Manager works with the Board Treasurer and Director on the annual budget and to prepare the annual audit.

# Our Programs

## **Pre-Primary**

The Pre-Primary classroom serves children as young as 2 years 5 months. It is designed as a one-year experience for children not-yet-ready for the Primary classroom. The Pre-Primary program offers a similar approach and environment to the Primary classrooms, but without a full complement of Montessori materials as required in a classroom that serves a mixed age group with children up to age six. The Pre-Primary classroom focuses on helping children develop independence, motor skills, concentration, toilet learning, and language enrichment.

## **Primary**

Our Primary classrooms are the multi-age Montessori program designed specifically for children around 3 years old to 6 years old. It is a three-year program over which children are given sequenced lessons designed to increase their skills and independence. Children who start in the primary classroom when they are younger than three years may spend a fourth year in that classroom. Children may enroll for the morning program with a 12:00pm dismissal or enroll for an extended day where children have lunch at school, a rest time if needed, and an afternoon Montessori work period, leaving school at 2:30pm. Children at the age of public-school kindergarten are expected to participate in the extended day program.

Children develop close relationships during their time in the primary program with the same teacher and classmates. Children move freely between all areas of the classroom: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, and Language. Geography and science are presented in a sensorial manner and woven throughout the curriculum areas. Art, music, and storytelling are part of the child's daily experiences. Once children have been introduced to specific activities they are free to choose to use the materials and work with activities that appeal to them.

Unlike a traditional kindergarten program, the final year of the primary classroom cycle is really a "capstone" experience. These oldest students are confident in who they are; they are the role models and leaders of the class; they apply the skills and knowledge gleaned in the prior years and extend their work into more advanced mathematics and language activities. All the threads of the Montessori primary program come together for the child in the third (or sometimes the fourth) year. COS primary graduates enter first grade with outstanding linguistic and mathematical competencies, as well as strong social skills and generosity which aid them in making and keeping close friendships. The expectation at COS is for children to complete the developmental cycle of our primary program, including what is the kindergarten year in traditional schools, in order to achieve the full benefit of a Montessori primary education.

## **Enrichment Program**

Our Enrichment Program meets every day from 2:30pm-4:30pm. The children eat snack together and spend the afternoon exploring art, manipulatives, music, and creative free play. Depending on enrollment, "drop-ins" may be arranged as space allows, and need to be scheduled 24 hours in advance by calling the office.

## **Language**

Our Language Specialist provides French classes once a week for all classrooms. The children learn French vocabulary and culture through games, music, and literature. Typical themes include numbers, colors, pleasantries, food, and everyday activities.

## **Art and Music**

Art and music are integrated in the classroom daily. Additionally, children attend a once a week music program by a Music Specialist. Children participate in our bi-annual concerts.

## Communication Between Home and School

Frequent and open communication between home and school is crucial to the effective functioning of the school and the well-being of each child. We use a number of methods to make sure we present the information you need in a clear and timely manner.

Reading our Parent Handbook is essential for all parents and caregivers. Please refer first to the Parent Handbook during the school year when you have questions.

### **Contacting Your Child's Teacher**

A warm communication with your child's master teacher is the principle vehicle for questions that may arise concerning your child. Please do not hesitate to call the office or send a note in to your child's teacher with questions concerning your child or to schedule a meeting. Your child's teacher will let you know how best to contact them. Please understand that teachers are not available to answer or return calls during classroom hours, and that they will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

*Please do not call or text the teacher or assistant's mobile phone, drop by the classroom before or during school, or hold conversations during drop off and pick up.*

Please inform your child's teacher if there is a change in the home situation: death, divorce, relocation, a new baby, friends or relatives visiting, either parent leaving for a trip, a new babysitter or caregiver, a change in carpool or the child's daily routine or any fears or significant bad dreams. A change at home probably will be reflected simultaneously or subsequently in behavior at school. The more information we have, the more helpful and supportive we can be to your child.

*These are the best lines to follow in communicating with the school about your child's progress and continuity at COS:*

#### **Parent to Teacher**

Many times a child's development presents hard issues to consider. Working directly with the teacher in a spirit of collaboration is the most effective way to resolve any issue, and to build a solid partnership between school and home for future work. Speaking to anyone else about the issue may make you feel better, but will not help your child.

You are, by definition, your child's advocate. At the same time, the school is also an advocate for your child; we each bring our own view of the situation. Our faculty's experience and training help them to evaluate and make sense of their observations of your child. We want to work together with you, on the same side of the table, to develop mutual understanding in the interest of your child.

### *Parent or Teacher to the Director*

Your child's teacher is the best person to communicate questions or concerns about your child, but if either you or the teacher feels the need for a fresh perspective, we will happily arrange a meeting to include the parent, teacher, and school Director.

### *Parent to Director*

The Director has an open door policy and you are welcome to stop in with a quick question or information to share. It is always best to schedule a meeting if your concern is serious. Parents are welcome to contact the Director with matters pertaining to observation of the classrooms, referrals for service, special events, and administrative issues.

### **Contacting the Office**

The Office Manager is able to answer many of your questions by email or phone, and is able to take a message for your child's teacher if you would like to speak with her. The Office Manager can answer most general questions about daily operations at the school and is the person to answer questions about invoices, statements, or the status of your account.

*Most calls during school hours are answered the same day, but if you get the voicemail system during school hours, please wait a few minutes and try again or leave a message.*

### **Contacting the Board**

The Board is available to speak about school governance, finances, and school leadership. The Board can address questions about the mission and vision of the school and long-range strategic planning. They welcome your interest in serving on the Board of Directors, and can inform you about the nomination process and the extent of the commitment of service. The entire Board of Directors can be contacted by email at [board@childrensown.org](mailto:board@childrensown.org).

### **Contacting the Parent Committee**

The Parent Committee chair is available to speak to parents about volunteering at all-school events. They can address questions about the community, fundraising efforts, and all-school initiatives. They are instrumental in working with the Director to support and sustain the teaching staff.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

School is closed for formal conferences two days each year: once in the fall and once in the spring. Sign-up is done electronically. Each conference is an in-person meeting, and parents receive written progress reports from the teacher. Additional meetings may be set up with your child's Montessori guide as needed.

## **Communication from School**

The school publishes a newsletter that is emailed home during the school year. This newsletter contains updates from the classrooms, announcements, and upcoming school events. Please be sure that your e-mail address is correct, and verify that your e-mail system accepts e-mails distributed via third-party service providers on behalf of COS.

## **Notes Home**

Children will occasionally be given notes to take home. These will be placed in the child's lunch box or given to the person who picks up your child. A copy of notes sent home may also be sent via email.

## **Parent Committee Notices**

The Parent Committee will often send notices to families about upcoming school events. Parent Committee notices will be sent from the office, and the Parents' Committee may also contribute to the newsletter. From time to time, class parents or the Parents' Committee will send notices to individual families; the office should be copied on these notices.

## **Email**

Our Office Manager manages our email lists and may send essential and time-sensitive messages via e-mail. Parent contact information is provided in the Class Lists and in the Family Directory. This personal contact information is solely for the use of COS families. It is not to be distributed or used by other individuals or organizations. *Please send any email you would like to send to the school community to the Director or Office Manager for review and approval.*

# Daily Schedule

Arrival	8:30am – 8:40am
Pre-primary/Primary morning	8:30am – 12:00pm
Morning dismissal (playground)	11:50am - 12:00pm
Lunch	12:00pm – 1:00pm
Extended Day	1:00pm – 2:15pm
Afternoon dismissal (playground)	2:20pm – 2:30pm
Enrichment Program	2:30pm – 4:30pm

## Attendance: Why it Matters

Consistent attendance is important. The children who benefit most from the prepared environment are those who attend regularly. Young children thrive on routine.

- A consistent routine provides security for the young child, which in turn enables learning.
- A child's experience in the classroom and with the materials is cumulative; consistent attendance bolsters learning.
- Your own commitment to your child's presence in school affirms the importance of school and learning.
- Intermittent attendance can affect both your child's adaptation to school and their learning.

Please schedule family vacations and trips to coincide with school holidays and schedule appointments with doctors, dentists, and other professionals outside classroom hours whenever possible. If your child has an appointment that will detain them, please inform the office via phone or email ahead of time.

## Getting to School on Time

We expect all children to be at school regularly at 8:30am. When younger children arrive late, it disturbs their sense of order: their sense of what is right and what is expected, of how things are supposed to be. Late arrivals also disrupt the classroom community, the work of the other children, and the teacher.

School begins at 8:30am and a prompt arrival allows for the expected three-hour work period of a Montessori classroom. Out of respect for your own child, the classroom community, the other children, and the teachers, please help your child arrive at school on time.

COS faculty are available to receive children during our drop off window from 8:30 – 8:40am and escort them to their classrooms. If you arrive after 8:40 am, please go to the double glass Pavilion Doors and ring the bell. A staff member will greet you at the door. If you arrive late, you are welcome to walk your child to their classroom. Please make sure that your child's teachers are aware they have arrived.

## Pick Up Times

We dismiss from our playgrounds unless the weather prohibits outside dismissal. Come to the playground gate to pick up your child. Once the teacher has released your child, your child is once again under

your supervision. ***Children are never allowed inside the building without adult supervision after they have been released to an authorized adult.***

Please be sensitive to your child's pick-up time. Children who have not been picked up on time (12:00pm, 2:30 pm, or 4:30pm, depending on how they are enrolled) will be waiting in the office. Children who are routinely picked up late from the Enrichment Program may be withdrawn from that program.

Even if you have called the school to say you are going to be a few minutes late, your child will be waiting in the office. The Director or Office Manager will be waiting with your child and will record the date and time of late pick-up. Please come in through the front door where you will be buzzed in and walk directly up to the Office.

If you have a scheduling conflict, such as needing to pick up another child at another school, we ask that you arrange to pick up your COS child before going elsewhere. We expect all caregivers to be on time for pick-up. In the event of an unavoidable delay, please call the school at 781-729-2689.

### **Special Circumstances Pick-Up**

Pick-up by someone other than the parent/guardian or regular caregiver needs to be authorized daily. Please call or email if a friend, neighbor, new caregiver, or family member will be picking up your child.

It is always best if your child's teachers are introduced ahead of time to someone, other than yourself, who will be picking up your child. Before releasing your child, teachers will check identification of people they don't recognize.

### **Snow Days/Inclement Weather**

Children's Own School always closes for snowstorms and other severe weather whenever the Winchester Public Schools close. There are various listings on the Internet, radio, and TV. You can also call the Winchester Public School Link Line at 781-721-7004 or go to their website. The school may also close even though public schools are open, if the Director determines it is in the best interest of the children or the school to do so. An e-mail will be sent out to notify families as early as possible in this event.

If Winchester has a one-hour delay, COS will as well. However, if there is a two-hour delay in Winchester, our morning programs will be cancelled. Our afternoon programs will begin at 12:00 noon, and children will bring lunch as usual.

Occasionally when severe weather develops during the school day, afternoon classes are cancelled on short notice. An all-school email will be sent out in this event, and parents will be telephoned as needed.

## Parking Policy and Procedures

*You must park and walk your child into and out of school each day.*

Mobile phone use during drop-off and pick-up is strictly prohibited. Phones are a distraction. Give your child your full attention during arrival and dismissal.

- Pull all the way into the driveway, to the Exit sign
- Park behind the car in front of you
- Turn engine off
- Bring your child to his or her teacher or assistant, making sure to **hold hands at all times**
- Say good-bye
- Return to your car, and pull out of the driveway slowly
- Make a right turn only onto Main Street

Alternately, you may choose to legally park on Main St., being sure not to park in the lane where families are waiting to pull into the COS driveway to drop off, and walk onto school grounds.

Please be mindful of our neighbors. Park so that you do not make it difficult for them to arrive at or leave their homes.

Do not pull into the COS driveway from Main Street until you can do so without blocking the driveway shared by our neighbor.

If you arrive late, please park legally on Main Street and walk your child to the building. Please do not park in the driveway. We can accommodate cars at a standstill during pick-up and drop-off times only.

# Everyday Life

Many parents ask questions about what kind of foods to pack for lunch, snacks, appropriate clothing, how children are encouraged to conduct themselves at school, and how to celebrate your child's birthday. Many of your questions will be answered here.

## **Nutrition**

What people eat is, on one hand, highly personal with roots in culture and even religion. At COS we are very aware and respectful of this point in our community. On the other hand, diet is a major factor for children's sound growth and development, and how well they function, attend, and learn on a daily basis. The principles we try to promote for healthy nutrition for children this age include: appropriately sized servings, additive free foods, and the avoidance of processed and pre-packaged food.

If your child has any food sensitivities, please make this clear when filling out your paperwork. If special measures must be taken to protect your child, such as providing an *EpiPen*, then please speak directly to your child's teachers and review the requirements in the Health and Safety Section.

Children's Own School serves a snack each day in every classroom. Snacks vary, depending on class food restrictions, and usually include a carbohydrate along with a fruit, vegetable, or a protein. We serve filtered water each day at snack. Water is available for children to drink throughout the day and children are encouraged to drink water when they are thirsty at any time during the day.

Children staying for afternoons bring their lunches. Foods that children can manage without help are the most popular: small sandwiches, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, berries, cheese and crackers, raisins, peeled hard boiled eggs, etc. Small individual containers that children can open and close independently are a better option than pre-packed food marketed as an individual serving.

*Children's Own School is a nut free space, so please do not include peanut butter or any other peanut or nut products in your child's lunch. Because of allergies, children are not allowed to share or trade food with their classmates.*

Teachers encourage children to eat their lunches. Any food not consumed will be sent home each day. Insulated boxes/bags with cold packs are recommended because lunch boxes cannot be refrigerated at school.

## **Nut Free Environment**

Children's Own School is a **NUT-FREE** school. Because children who are severely allergic can have an anaphylactic reaction to trace amounts of peanuts or tree nuts, we must request the cooperation of all COS families and staff. We realize this restriction will be inconvenient for some, but this is to protect children with severe allergies.

We ask everyone to make a conscious effort to keep peanut butter and any foods consisting of or containing peanuts or tree nuts away from our school and school grounds. Please do not use peanuts, peanut

products, nuts, or nut products when preparing food that your child will bring to school. Please read ingredient labels on packaged foods. Any food sent into COS to be shared with the class must have been made in a **total nut-free facility**. COS cannot guarantee the school to be peanut/nut-free, but with the cooperation of all families and staff members, we will be able to minimize the risk of any allergic reactions.

### **Social Aspects of Food**

Food is not just the essential fuel for our bodies, it also serves a social function. At COS we promote this aspect of food by conducting snack and lunchtime in a way that provides for this social element and the exercise of the common grace and courtesies related to food.

## ***Clothing***

### **General Guidelines**

Children take pride in being able to dress themselves. When choosing clothes for your child, look for front openings and simple fastenings, such as large, loose buttons and easy zippers. Clothing that is easy to manipulate also helps children prevent bathroom “accidents.” It can be helpful to offer your child a choice of two options of clothing to avoid struggles over what to wear to school. For example, “Would you like to wear this blue shirt or the orange one?”

### **Outerwear**

The children will have outdoor playtime every day, except during truly inclement weather. This should be taken into consideration when dressing your child. In rainy weather, this means raincoats and rain boots. In winter, snow pants and boots are nice for warmth, even if it’s not snowy. Don’t forget hats and mittens or gloves!

### **Shoes**

Please choose **closed-toe outdoor shoes** that are safe and comfortable for your child to run, climb, and play in outside. If your child has not mastered lacing, please consider buying shoes with Velcro fasteners. Shoes worn to school should enable your child to safely run, climb, play, and work outdoors. Sandals, clogs, Crocs, or flip flops are not safe for the level of activity that children engage in during the day.

### **Classroom Indoor Shoes**

At COS, as in many Montessori schools, our students wear indoor shoes. Our New England weather often requires rain or snow boots for outdoor play. Indoor shoes allow your child to wear weather appropriate gear to school and still be comfortable in the classroom. They also keep the environment as clean as possible. Indoor shoes are worn all day, and they should be comfortable, safe, and sturdy. We prefer a pair of shoes that are left at school, but if you choose slippers for indoor shoes, please choose ones that support independence, stay on your child’s feet, and do not have large, floppy heads or other distracting details. Your child’s teacher can provide guidance on the type of indoor shoe they prefer. Children have an indoor shoe drawer in their cubby.

### **Jewelry, Toys, and other Distractions**

Children may not bring certain personal belongings to school including toys, costume jewelry, money, blankets, etc. to school. This creates a distraction from the school day, and there is the possibility that the item may become lost or broken. Please consult with your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns.

### **Labeling**

Please label all clothing with nametags or with a permanent marker. Mittens, hats, boots and yellow raincoats are especially easy to mix up. We ask for your help with this because many children will not claim their own clothing.

### **Cubbies**

Each child has a cubby labeled with his or her name and/or picture. This is a place where the child's personal belongings can be kept safely at school. There is ample room for coats and sweaters, a change of clothes, and a lunch box. Teachers check your child's cubby daily for lunch boxes, wet clothes, and other things that need to go home. Occasionally a teacher may leave a note in your child's lunchbox with a request for additional clothing.

### **Lost And Found**

Labeling your child's possessions will minimize the risk of any of them ending up in the Lost and Found, which is located in the Pavilion hallway. If your child is missing any belongings, check the Lost and Found bin because unclaimed clothes, shoes, toys, and other personal articles are periodically donated to charity.

### **Toileting**

Some children who have already mastered using the toilet have trouble adjusting at school and have wetting episodes. This is normal, but feel free to ask your child's teacher for information or advice if you have concerns. This is one reason we ask families to provide an extra change of clothes to have available in your child's cubby. Feel free to contact the Director if you have any questions about our toileting process, toilet learning, or other areas of development.

# Grace and Courtesy

When parents choose to enroll their child in Children's Own School, they are choosing a special community. COS strives to provide opportunities for each child, teacher, parent, and staff member to be a successful and valued member of the community. We understand that a community functions most successfully with shared norms of behavior and expectations.

We encourage everyone at COS to take care of themselves, take care of others, and take care of our school environment. When all adult members of our school follow these principles of respect, we provide countless examples for our children to emulate. When we are consistent in these standards, we are raising children to become productive and successful members of the greater world community. We expect all adults to support the Montessori lessons of grace and courtesy by their own example.

- Treat all people with courtesy and respect;
- Address conflicts in a calm and private manner, taking care not to use raised voices or name calling;
- Respect the privacy of adults and children;
- Refrain from passing along information that might be hurtful to someone or is not intended as public knowledge;
- Refrain from complaining to someone other than the person(s) with whom you have an issue. Address the issue directly.

The use of broadcast emails, blogs, or public websites to contact fellow parents about sensitive issues involving COS policy, teachers, staff, or students is inappropriate. COS Board members are not charged with oversight of day-to-day school management. When faced with questions about such issues, Board members will simply pass those concerns on to the Director.

## **Child Guidance Policy**

The goal of our child guidance policy is to maximize the growth and development of children and to protect the group and the individuals within it. Child guidance is used in a consistent, reasonable, and appropriate way based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of a child. Child guidance is based on setting clear, age-appropriate, experience-appropriate limits, offering alternative behaviors, and giving choices. Child guidance policies apply to all school events on all school property.

## **Separation**

Even children who have previously been in school may have difficulty making new transitions. Do not be alarmed if you see regressions to stages (crying, baby talk, loud vocalizations, etc.) you thought your child had finished. Teachers use a variety of strategies to comfort a child with separation anxiety, and children often calm down and move on with their day long before the adult who experienced the child's distraught behavior. You are welcome to call the school to see how your child has settled in on days where separating has been a struggle. Any concerns you have about separation anxiety your child may be experiencing can be discussed with the Director and your child's teacher.

# School Traditions

## **Birthdays**

Parents are invited to communicate with your child's classroom teacher about the specific day and time for the celebration and any unique birthday traditions followed by the classroom. If your child's birthday is in the summer, please consult with the teacher if it is appropriate to celebrate your child's birthday at another time during the school year.

Children's Own School is fortunate to have a library that continually grows, in part through the Birthday Book Tradition, in which each family donates a book in honor of their child's birthday. Most families inscribe the book, but special stickers are also available in the office. You might donate a copy of your child's favorite story or ask your child's teacher to suggest a title, author, illustrator, or topic. New titles are always appreciated, as are new copies of favorites we've loved, literally, to pieces. Books celebrating friendship, diversity, individuality, art, dance/movement, cooking, or the seasons are always good choices.

## **Flower Arranging**

As part of the Montessori curriculum, children are given lessons in flower arranging. They fill vases with flowers and greenery, which beautify the classroom and school environment. The classroom parents organize a weekly schedule for parents to provide fresh flowers. Most flowers are welcome; please avoid flowers with thorns or strong aromas. As a general guideline, parents typically bring one dozen of two different but complimentary flowers and assorted greenery. The teachers will place the flowers in large water basins until the children are ready to arrange!

## **Winter and Spring Concerts**

During the winter holidays and end of the school year, the children present a musical concert. All family members and friends are invited. In order to accommodate all families, two morning programs are held. A professional videotape of the program will be available for purchase. ***Please refrain from videotaping, including the use of cameras and phones.*** Please be considerate of others watching the program.

## ***SOCIAL EVENTS***

The Parent Committee organizes events throughout the year. Some events are traditional, including a popsicle party before school starts and a reception for new families. Some events are designed for families while others are for adults-only. It is your responsibility to supervise your children at school-sponsored family events.

## ***ORIENTATION AND EDUCATIONAL EVENTS***

### **Orientation for All COS Parents**

Parent Orientation is held the first Thursday in September, from 7:00pm to 8:00 pm. This is an important evening where we welcome our new and continuing parents for the new school year. The Director,

teachers, and assistants will introduce themselves. The Board president and Parent Committee chair will formally welcome you and present opportunities for community participation.

### **New Student Orientation**

New student orientation takes place before school starts. Children new to our school are welcomed into the classroom for fifteen minutes. They will meet their teachers and familiarize themselves with the school environment. Light refreshments for parents will be served in the Pavilion and the Director will be available to answer questions and discuss parents' thoughts about children starting school.

### **Montessori Education and Information**

Throughout the year, parents are invited to different events organized by the staff. These events are designed to help parents with practical information about child development and specific information about Montessori philosophy. Parents are encouraged to bring questions about the classroom, curriculum, and stages of development. Dates and times for these events will be announced in the newsletter.

## ***SCHOOL SUPPORT EVENTS***

### **Board of Directors Meetings**

Board meetings are open to all members of our community. The elected members of the Board vote on important leadership and financial decisions throughout the year. A teacher representative, a parent representative, and the Director attend Board meetings as non-voting members.

### **Open House and Prospective Family Information Sessions**

Each fall we hold an open house when parents are invited to visit our school on a Saturday morning when children are not present. From November through January we hold information sessions for prospective parents. At these information sessions, parents get an opportunity to meet with the director, tour the school, and observe in a classroom. We encourage you to invite friends who may be interested in enrolling their children at COS to these events.

### **COS Annual Auction**

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we encourage you to contribute, attend, and invite friends! We depend on the Auction to provide scholarships, increase our endowment, and support important initiatives, such the Professional Development Fund and Building Improvements.

# Enrollment

## **Admissions**

We give preference in admission to siblings of current students and alumni when those older siblings have enrolled for the full developmental cycle of our primary program (meaning they leave COS to enter first grade). Otherwise, siblings are considered as any other new applicant. Sibling applications are due by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **Re-Enrollment**

Re-enrollment contracts are distributed to all current families in February. To re-enroll your child for the following school year, please submit your contract and deposit before the deadline indicated at the bottom of the contract. You will have only two weeks to submit your contract and deposit, so please plan ahead. There is a separate contract for the Enrichment Program. The deposit for our regular programs and for the Enrichment Program is a month's tuition, applied to the first payment. Deposits are non-refundable.

## **Classroom Assignments**

Our primary classrooms are made up of children 2.9 to 6 years of age. The children stay in the same classroom for all three years to develop a close knit family community. Parent input, in writing, is welcome prior to decisions about classroom assignments. You are invited to provide information about your child's friendships, temperament, and/or learning style that you feel might help the school determine the best class placement.

## **Withdrawal**

The school reserves the right to dismiss any student whose behavior or lack of cooperation is deemed unacceptable, or whose parents no longer have a cooperative relationship with the school. Uncooperative behavior at Children's Own School includes but is not limited to a sustained disregard for school policy, non-payment of tuition, disparagement of the school's faculty, administration, board, or families, or behavior that creates an unsafe or uncooperative environment for children, parents, or teachers.

## **Scholarships**

Scholarships are available to continuing and incoming COS families, and awards are based on financial need. If a family needs a scholarship, it is the responsibility of the parent(s) to obtain, complete, and submit the application. Whether or not your child is currently enrolled, in order to qualify for a scholarship for September, you must submit your completed application along with copies of your tax returns no later than February 15th. If your family is receiving a scholarship for the current school year there is no guarantee that your family will receive a scholarship for the next school year. Families currently on scholarship who seek financial assistance for next year must follow the same procedure and meet the same deadlines as prospective/incoming families.

Applications will not be considered if they are late or incomplete or do not include copies of tax returns. Any family with an unpaid balance after February 28th is ineligible for a scholarship. Due to the overwhelming need for financial assistance, we must require that families receiving scholarships pay a minimum of \$2,000 per child per school year.

## ***Payment and Fees***

### **Tuition Payments**

There are two options for tuition payment plans for our Montessori programs. You choose the plan when you sign your contract. After your deposit is subtracted, the balance can be invoiced in two installments (half due July 1<sup>st</sup> and half due March 1<sup>st</sup>) or nine installments (one-ninth due the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month, July through March).

For the Enrichment Program, following your deposit, the balance will be invoiced in two installments (half due August 15 and half due January 15).

Prompt payment is essential to the financial well being of the school. Late payments are subject to interest, which will be added to your balance. Payments overdue by more than 30 days will trigger the acceleration of the payment date for the remaining tuition balance for the school year, which will become immediately due and payable.

## **Fundraising/Development**

Children's Own School is a non-profit preschool, so fundraising is essential. We do all we can to keep our tuition from being excessive, but at the same time we need to attract and hold onto highly qualified teachers and staff, and maintain our beloved building. Our board, staff and parents devote time and effort to the following development initiatives:

- Annual Fund
- Annual Auction

If your company matches charitable contributions or if you know of a potential source of grants or funding, we would very much appreciate you giving our Director or Office Manager the contact information.

### **Volunteer And Donation Opportunities**

At the beginning of the school year, COS will provide each family with a list of volunteer opportunities. Parents who would like to volunteer to help the school throughout the year are encouraged to talk to the Parent Committee Chair, a class parent, or send an email to the office.

### **COS Tax I.D. Number**

Children's Own School's tax I.D. number is 04-600-6613. This is the number that you will need for tax returns to deduct tuition and charitable contributions. If you have a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for dependent care through your employer, you will need this number for reimbursement.

# Health and Safety

## **Call If Late or Absent**

Please be sure to telephone the school at 781-729-2689 if your child will be absent or more than 30 minutes late. This is important so we know that your child is safe. If your child is ill, please give us any symptom information we should report to the teachers so they are aware of contagions.

## **Hold Children's Hands in the Driveway**

Always hold your child's hand when walking through the parking lot; it is the best way to avoid injury. If you need assistance with this, please ask a teacher or staff member.

## **No Idling**

Do not idle your car engine in the driveway or on Main Street. When dropping off or picking up your child, please remember to turn off your car engine.

## **Wash Hands**

Wash hands after breakfast if handling and/or consuming foods containing peanuts or tree nuts. This will prevent possible life-threatening reactions from our children with nut allergies.

## **No Smoking, Etc.**

Smoking in or near the building or anywhere on school grounds is prohibited. The school will not release any child to any adult, including a parent, who is intoxicated.

## **Health Policies**

Our health policy has been designed with both adults and children in mind. One of our biggest dilemmas is caring for a child who becomes sick while at school. While there is no entirely satisfactory solution, in most cases it is not in the best interest of the individual or the group for an ill child to finish out the day at COS. We understand that it is difficult for parents to miss work or other commitments, but we need to ask you to take your child home if she/he has a contagious illness, or requires prolonged individual staff attention that interferes with the safety and normal functioning of the group.

COS will not discriminate against children, parents, teachers, or staff because of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) status. Any HIV positive member of the community will be encouraged to remain at the school for as long as is appropriate to their state of health and to the well-being of the school community. Any questions or concerns should be addressed in confidence with the Director.

***All parents are expected to observe the school's health policies for the safety of their own children, other children and their families, teachers, and staff.***

Teachers and staff are required to enforce the following health policies. Any child experiencing **ANY** of the following must be sent home:

- Fever of 101<sup>0</sup> or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Suspected communicable illness or infection

- Illness that prevents child from participating

Children may return to school only if they meet **ALL** of these criteria:

- Fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours
- Diarrhea-free for 24 hours
- Vomit-free for 24 hours
- If taking medication for a communicable illness, on it for at least 24 hours

Please do not send your child to school if you do not want them to go outside. We all go outside every day, with rare exceptions for extreme weather.

If your child is staying home ill, please be sure to phone the school at 781-729-2689. If you get voicemail, please leave a message. We need to know that your child's absence from school is no cause for alarm, and notification of communicable illness is very important for us and other families in the school. When we know of a communicable illness in a classroom, we will notify the appropriate members of the school community.

### **Hygiene**

Children and staff members are required to wash hands with soap and water at these times:

- Before eating or handling food
- After going to the bathroom or assisting in toileting
- After contact with bodily fluids or excretions
- After cleaning areas contaminated with bodily fluids or excretions
- After handling classroom pets or their equipment

Commonly used areas are frequently sanitized with bleach solution (of one tablespoon to one quart of water, fresh daily) or another sanitizer approved by the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC). Special attention will be given to the proper treatment of injuries and conditions that result in the presence of blood or other bodily fluids that transmit disease. Every member of the staff is familiar with the proper response to such situations. Soiled clothing will be sealed and sent home for laundering.

### **Injury Reports**

If a child is injured during school hours, the child's teacher will tell the parent/caregiver about the injury at pick-up or immediately by telephone, depending on the extent of the injury. The child's teacher will complete an injury report and have the parent/caregiver sign it. The signed injury report goes into the central log, with photocopies going to the family and into the child's file.

## Forms

We need parents of ALL children to COMPLETE ALL of the fall enrollment forms:

1. First Aid and Emergency Medical Care Consent Form
2. Child's Face Sheet / Enrollment Form
3. Health Record (see below)
4. Permission Slips
5. Development History and Background Information

and mail ALL of them back to us BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS.

None of these forms are optional, no matter what we already have on file from the previous school year or the summer. All of these forms need to be resubmitted each year. You may wish to make a photocopy for your reference in future years.

***MASSACHUSETTS STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT ALL CHILDREN'S FILES BE IN ORDER BEFORE THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.***

### Health Record

Your child's health record must show all required immunizations, a lead test screening, and a recent physical exam. Required Immunizations:

- 4 doses of vaccine for DTaP/DTP
- 3 doses of vaccine for polio
- 1 dose of vaccine for MMR
- 3 doses of vaccine for Hib
- 3 doses of vaccine for Hepatitis B
- 1 dose of vaccine for varicella or record of chickenpox

There are combination shots available. For example, one shot of Pediarix covers one DTaP, one polio, and one Hep B.

If you are unable to get the missing doses in time for a complete health record to be submitted to the school by Labor Day, please make an appointment for early in the school year and provide the school with a note from the health care provider stating the date(s) and the name(s) of the vaccine(s) scheduled.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health also recommends the following immunizations: 4 doses of PCV, 2 doses of Hep A, 3 doses of rotavirus, and an annual flu vaccine.

If any immunizations cannot be given, we will need a written exemption from your child's health care provider or religious advisor. The Department of Early Education and Care requires lead screening to be noted on your child's record.

Your child's health record can be either a printout from the physician's office or the completed health record that is included in the fall enrollment forms booklet. Either way, the physician needs to sign and legibly date the record. *Please do not remove the page from the booklet;* take the whole booklet to the doctor's office. Please keep the booklet intact.

The health record must show the date of a recent physical exam and is valid for one calendar year from that date. Please be sure to give us an updated health record if it expires before the end of the school year.

*After each annual physical your child receives, please be sure to make and keep at least two or three photocopies of your child's health record, and give one to COS.*

### **Medication Consent**

If you need a teacher to administer any medication to your child, you must obtain a Medication Consent Form from the office. Please complete the form and give it to your child's teacher, along with the medication. Additionally, we must have a doctor's authorization – either a prescription label or a doctor's signature – for any internal use medication (e.g. liquid, pill, ear/eye/nose drops). Doctor authorization is not required for topical medication (e.g. cream, ointment).

# Parental Rights

Chapter 28A, Section 10 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates to the Office for Children the legal responsibility of promulgating rules and regulations governing the operation of day care centers (including preschools).

In accordance with this law, the Office for Children published the requirements now in effect on May 1, 1997. The licensee must comply with these regulations in order to ensure a minimum level of care for the children serviced by the day care center and/or nursery school.

The licensee (day care center owner) is required to inform all parents of 'the rights of parents' as stated in the regulations at the time of admission of their child to the center. These rights are as follows:

7.05(12) Parent Visits. The licensee shall permit and encourage parents to visit the center and their child's room while their child is present.

7.05(13) Parent Input. The licensee shall have a procedure for allowing parental input in the development of center policy and programs. The licensee shall provide an explanation to the parent(s) when a parent makes suggestions as to the program or policy of a center and the suggestions are not adopted by the licensee. If the parent requests a written response, the licensee shall respond in writing to the parent.

7.05(14) Reports to Parents. The licensee shall periodically but at least every six (6) months prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the center's records. The licensee shall provide a copy of each report to the parent(s) or meet with them at least every six (6) months to discuss their child's activities and participation in the center. In addition:

- (a) for infants under fifteen months of age, the licensee shall complete a written progress report of the child's development every three (3) months, and provide it to the parent(s);
- (b) the licensee shall bring special problems or significant development concerns, particularly as they regard infants, to the parent's attention as soon as they arise.

7.05(15) *Parent Conferences*. The licensee shall make the staff available for individual conferences with parents at parental request.

7.05(19) *Confidentiality and Distribution of Records*. Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. The licensee shall not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parent(s). The licensee shall notify the parent(s) if a child's record is subpoenaed. The child's parent(s) shall, upon request, have access to his child's record at reasonable times. In no event shall such access be delayed more than two (2) business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent(s). Upon such request for access the child's entire record, regardless of the physical location of its parts, shall be made available. The licensee shall establish procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of such information; and shall maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating any persons to whom information contained in a child's record has been released. Each person disseminating or releasing information contained in a child's record, in whole or in part, shall upon each instance of dissemination or release, enter into the

log the following: his name, signature, position, the date, the portions of the record which were disseminated or released, the purpose of the record which was disseminated or released, the purpose of such dissemination or release, and the signature of the person to whom the information is disseminated or released. Such log shall be available only to the child's parent(s) and center personnel responsible for record maintenance.

7.05(20) *Charge for Copies.* The licensee shall not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

7.05(21) *Amending the Child's Record.* A child's parent(s) shall have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to the child's records; and procedures for providing emergency health care.

# Montessori and Child Development

Maria Montessori identified four planes of development over the course of her work: The First Plane (0-6 years); the Second Plane (6-12 years); the Third Plane (12-18 years); and the Fourth Plane (18-24 years). Each has its own set of developmental characteristics that help us understand the changes we are likely to see in children during that time. Montessori's thoughts on the planes of development are important as they are used to carefully design a classroom environment to meet the developmental needs of children at each stage. In Montessori classrooms at all stages, the teacher acts as a nurturing guide and facilitator. Children are given sequenced lessons designed to increase their skill and independence. Once they have been introduced to the activities and materials, children enjoy choosing their own work.

Children in the first plane of development explore the world through their senses. They delight in examining every aspect of their environments, language, and culture – their young minds often likened to 'sponges' that absorb everything around them. It is important that children this age learn in cheerful spaces that are beautifully outfitted with materials to intrigue and guide them through their learning and self-development.

## **Preparing Your Child to Start School**

Adjusting to school for the first time does not have to be an uncomfortable experience for either the parent or the child. We offer some advice on success transitioning to your child's Montessori environment prior to school beginning. Young children live in the present and concepts of future time can be confusing to them. Therefore, counting down the days until school starts only causes anxiety. Instead, begin to indirectly build the skills and schedules that will make the first day a smooth and easy transition, rather than an interruption of routine.

Now is the time to start to help develop your child's independence, concentration, and ability to choose. Begin teaching the skills, one at a time, that will allow your child to dress independently, help prepare and eat breakfast, and be responsible for getting ready to go. Then simply go on some small outings like running errands, until they are used to the routine of getting up and going.

Adjust your child's sleep schedule a few weeks before the start of school. Decide what time they will need to wake up to allow an unhurried start to the day. This is also a good time to reduce screen time - you won't want school to seem like a punishment the first day when it is turned off or drastically limited. When engaged with screens, children are rewarded for mere passivity. They won't be in the more natural state of mind they'll need to explore, experience, and be actively building their minds at school.

If you wish to discuss school with your child, do it in a low-key way such as noting 'Back to School' preparations in a store you may be visiting. If your child asks what school is and what they may do there, simply answer, "It's a place made especially for children where they can go each day to make friends, do their work, play games, and learn." Try not to prejudice your child or build up false expectations by being too specific about what they will do in school. That way, if they don't happen to paint (or whatever) on the first day, they won't be disappointed in either you or the school.

When their first day finally arrives and they are dressed and ready to go, you can announce that today is the day they get to go to school, to see the teachers, and meet other children. Following these simple suggestions can help make your child's beginning in school as successful and stress-free as possible.

### **Bringing Aspects of Montessori Home**

Simple changes to your home can be made that facilitates your child's growing independence fostered in their Montessori classroom. Order, independence, and self-direction are hallmarks of a Montessori classroom. Having a place for everything on a scale accessible to your child, promotes their independence. Ways to do this include having low shelves or a low hook/closet rod, keeping a step stool handy so your child can reach the toilet or sink or counter, helping them find a regular place for their playthings instead of putting everything in a bin, making healthy snacks available on a low pantry shelf and pouring drinks into a small manageable pitcher to keep in the refrigerator.

Provide feedback to your child that focuses on the process or the details of the effort, rather than the end product. For example, "I can see you used a lot of green in your painting" compared to "What a beautiful picture." This helps your child stay focused on their work and develop skills instead of just thinking about results. Be cautious about using rewards for once learning or behavior is externally motivated, a child's process can lose creativity, focus, and passion. Remember not to interrupt your child when they are focused.

A child must experience clear, consistent, and appropriate expectations, guidelines, feedback, and follow-through to feel secure. Be sure to present your child with advanced warnings regarding changes that may lead to acts of parental enforcement. When not adhering to established limits, a child should be given limited choices regarding how to proceed, and you should take a firm, but kind, stance in the follow-through. For example, if you are dropping off your four year old at school, be consistent in how you approach the drop off process. You may want to give a warning that you will soon be at school. When you arrive let them know it is time to leave the car and go to class. If they do not comply with the routine, give them a choice – they can get out of the car on their own or with assistance. If you do help, please try to be patient and gentle. After school, talk to your child about the issue and have them think of solutions for the future. Expect your child to test the limits and try not to take it personally. As your child develops, have the rules and limits change to reflect these changes.

### **Aspects of a Montessori Primary Program**

The Primary program focuses on these areas:

Practical Life – activities such as polishing, buttoning, and pouring strengthen motor skills and build concentration.

Sensorial – hands-on materials such as the Pink Tower help children refine their senses and classify their world.

Mathematics – concrete material such as the Number Rods and the Golden Beads teach abstract mathematical concepts such as counting, sets, and the decimal system. Children work with large numbers into the thousands and even millions.

Language – materials such as the Sandpaper Letters and the Moveable Alphabet lay the foundation for writing

and later reading. We emphasize communication and children explore all aspects of spoken and written language.

Cultural Studies – maps, flags, land and water forms, and books bring to life the world's geography and peoples.

Art, Music and Movement – drawing, painting, singing, and dance are incorporated into daily classroom activities.

Grace and Courtesy – respect and empathy are rehearsed and practiced in the Primary classroom daily.

Dr. Montessori's time-tested curriculum addresses aspects of social, moral, cognitive, and emotional development. It promotes creative-thinking and decision-making skills. Children have freedom of choice and movement provided they understand and follow the limits of the classroom, community, and material. In addition, the multi-age classroom promotes cooperative learning and assists in social development. Younger children learn by example from the older classmates. The middle and older children's learning is reinforced by "teaching" the younger children, and the oldest children are presented with opportunities to be leaders. All of this leads to our shared goal of fostering independence and a life-long love of learning.

Welcome to Children's Own School.