

The
Children's House



nurturing active minds

Parent Handbook

The
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Telephone: 704.947.5414

Email: debbierichardson@roadrunner.com

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This handbook gives an overview of the policies and procedures of *The Children's House*. All parents are expected to be familiar with it. If you have any questions or suggestions about this guide, please contact us.

Schedule

8:00 – 8:10	Arrival
8:00 – 11:00	Free choice: individual work small group lessons individual snack
11:00-11:15	Circle
11:15-11:45	Outside play
11:45 – 12:00	Dismissal

Philosophy

Our School's program is based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori and the latest research in child development. Our goal is to provide a carefully prepared environment that meets the needs of each individual child and fosters independent thinkers.

We believe children have an innate curiosity that leads them to explore the world around them. They employ all of their senses to investigate their environment. They learn at their own pace and should be allowed to experience the excitement of learning by their own choice rather than by being forced.

The hand is the chief teacher of the child. In order to learn there must be concentration. The best way the child can concentrate is by fixing his attention on some task he is performing with his hands. All the materials in the classroom invite the child to use his hands for learning. Materials are graded from simple to complex and are introduced sequentially, thus the child integrates new concepts into his present body of knowledge and builds on his previous experiences. For example, he may grade rods that differ only in length from shortest to longest; then go on to grade rods that vary in length and width.

We recognize the importance of your child becoming an independent thinker. When the child solves a problem himself he becomes a more self-confident person and will feel he can attempt things himself and be successful. The more independent your child becomes the more he can participate in life and will have a positive attitude to all its challenges. Our goal is always to help the child build on his skills and show him how to approach problems rather than solving them for him. We do this by asking relevant questions that will lead him to the answer.

Teachers at The Children's House are role models. We listen attentively and think before we speak. We consciously teach our children to be kind and courteous to one another and to treat each other and adults with respect. The child receives specifically directed encouragement rather than blanket praise- this feels more genuine to the child and fosters self-motivation and positive self-regard.

Curriculum

The classroom is divided into different areas for your child to explore, this includes practical life, such as planting seeds, dramatic play, art, science, math and reading; there will be a healthy dose of outdoor play, including nature walks. Circle time will be an opportunity for children to come together and participate in songs, dance, stories, and other fun activities.

About Us

The Children's House (TCH) was founded in 2004. We are a private school located in the Community School of Davidson (CSD) serving staff and families of CSD and the Lake Norman community.

DEBBIE RICHARDSON | FOUNDER | DIRECTOR

Debbie received her Licentiate in Speech and Drama from Trinity College of Music, London. She obtained her Montessori Primary Diploma, (birth to 6 years) and Montessori Elementary Diploma, (6-9 years) at the London Montessori Center.

Transition Days

(We have orientation for new students. Please see calendar for dates and times for this program.)

Many parents express apprehension as their young child enters preschool. Starting a new class for a child is much like starting a new job for an adult – exciting but a little bit scary too. Children transferring from another environment can be intimidated by the strange materials and the basic ground-rules that seem so different from other preschools. Our goal is to make this transition into school as smooth and gentle as possible. In order to make the transition easier we will begin the school year with “shortened days” adding an hour each day as the week progresses.

It is sometimes hard to remember time and simplicity are gifts. We live in a fast paced society, which dictates that we are on the go constantly. We prefer a gentler, slow and steady pace and believe it benefits children.

Our objective is to create a relaxed and comfortable environment where the children can:

- Experience the routine a little bit at a time, adding on as the routine becomes familiar.
- Become comfortable in the classroom and learn the ground-rules of this new environment.
- Learn some of the basic Grace and Courtesy rules of classroom “etiquette”.

Suggestions for Separating

- Have lots of discussions with your child on his/her level about your leaving. Make sure that your child understands that you will not be staying with him/her at school. Reassure that you will always come back.
- Give them time words that they can understand. I.e.: “I will play one puzzle with you then I must go.” Or “I will be back at outside time.”
- Tell them you are leaving and say good-bye. (Sudden disappearances make children scared and mistrustful).

- If you say you are leaving – leave. (Lingering, coming back and forth, sends mixed messages to the child.)
- “Lovies” (security items) can sometimes ease the transition from home to school. Talk to the teacher if this is necessary.

Dropping Your Child Off in the Classroom

Too many adults can greatly affect the energy of our classroom and interfere with our ability as teachers to interact with and get to know the children.

For this reason, we ask that you please follow these guidelines:

- If you are able to leave your child easily, please do so as soon as you can.
- If you feel your child still needs you for moral support, please find a quiet corner, sit down and be as non-intrusive as possible.
- If you are unsure about leaving, you can always wait in the foyer or make sure that we have a number where we can reach you. We always call parents when a child is inconsolable.
- Please take conversations with each other and teachers to the hallway. Serious concerns need to be handled either by phone or conference.
- All conflict resolution (discipline) needs to be handled by the teachers.
- If a behavior occurs at school, we will make every attempt to handle it at school.

Car Pool and Traffic Safety

No child should arrive prior to 8:00 a.m. The teachers are involved in planning and preparation until then, and are not ready to give children their full attention. We start car-pool at 11: 45 a.m. Please pick up your child promptly at dismissal time. Your child learns to expect you at certain times each day. Your promptness shows respect for this inner rhythm in the child.

All children must wear SEATBELTS or be in child restraint seats. Children are safest in the back seat. We'll help them get in and buckled. If you have several children who need help with seat belts, pull ahead slightly and take time to buckle up while we load the next car.

Children MUST be with an adult at all times in the parking lot. Please hold your child's hand as you cross the parking lot to your car. If you would like to visit with another parent, please park and remember to NEVER leave your child/children in a car unattended.

We cannot accept verbal messages from children. Please write a note if your child is to go home with a friend or different driver.

PLEASE RESPECT HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES

Health Care Policies

If your child has any of the following symptoms, you will be asked to pick up your child from school as soon as possible, both for the safety of your child, and to prevent the spread of illness. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, an emergency contact from your emergency card will be called. In case of contagious illness other than a common cold a doctor's note will be required before your child can return to school. We understand that it is difficult for a parent to leave or miss work; therefore it is suggested that if necessary you arrange a backup for children when they are sick.

If your child is sick or unable to come to school, please let us know. Call (704-) 947-5414 in the morning. Leave a message on the voicemail if no one is available to answer. If you are taking a vacation, please let us know when we can expect your child's return.

CHILDREN WITH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS MUST REMAIN AT HOME UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN SYMPTOM FREE WITHOUT FEVER REDUCING MEDICINE FOR 24 HOURS:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea or loose stools inconsistent with usual bowel movements
- Any suspicious rash
- Persistent colored nasal discharge (longer than five days)
- Any contagious illness
- Any symptom requiring one-on-one care and/or causing severe discomfort
- Any open, oozing sore, bacterial infection and/or bloody gums
- Surgery (tubes, etc.) your child cannot return to the school until 24 hours have passed since the time of surgery

When returning to school after an illness, please remember the following:

- Your child must be free from all symptoms for 24 hours or longer
- Your child must be able to participate in all activities, including outside and large motor activities
- Chicken Pox lesions must be completely dry and there should be no other symptoms present
- Children taking prescription medicine for a contagious illness must have taken it for at least 24 hours
- Any contagious illness (i.e. pinkeye) requires a doctor's note to return

Please do not ask your child's teacher to administer medication of any kind to your child. If your child is in need of any medication, please administer the medication at home

before school. Because your child is only here for a period of four hours at most, there should be no need to ask teachers to give your child medication

School Closings and Emergencies

In the event of inclement weather, we follow the policy of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and CSD. If there is an emergency and we need to close the school early, someone will call each parent or emergency contact to pick up the children, and the teachers will stay until the last child is picked up.

Conferences and Communication

Conferences are scheduled for each child three times a year, in August, October, and May. Please respect the time allotted for your appointment. If additional time is needed, a further conference may be scheduled.

NOTE: Please do not bring your child to the conference.

COMMUNICATION

Newsletters: You will receive monthly newsletters containing current class information, as well as offering some ideas of interest to you from a parenting perspective.

INFORMAL AND FORMAL CONFERENCES

Formal conferences are scheduled three times a year (August, October, and May). However, parents should not feel these are the only times they may speak to their child's teacher. We are always interested in any information providing insight into your child's needs or your specific concerns. Phone, email, or send a note with your child to make an appointment to speak with your child's teacher and we will contact you promptly.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Your child's teacher may occasionally contact you if she needs to communicate something specific to you regarding your child.

Changes at Home

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform your child's teacher as soon as possible. Common causes of distress include: either one or both

parents being away from home for any reason for an extended period of time; new person living in the home; accident or death in the family; new caretaker; moving or a new baby. All information will be regarded as confidential. The teacher/Director will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment, which may affect your child as well.

Clothing

Self-care is an important part of the child building his independence; therefore clothing should not only be comfortable but should also allow the child to dress himself independently. Over-the-shoulder straps, stiff or small zippers and small buttons are frustrating to the child. Elastic waistbands are preferred over pants with zips and belts. Even though, we buy markers and paints that say “washable” sometimes they are not, so please dress your child for active play. This means casual, WASHABLE clothes and sturdy, soft-soled shoes. Tennis shoes are perfect! We do go outside in drizzly and cold weather, so raincoats and boots are appropriate. (Please, NO UMBRELLAS!) Layers are especially useful in spring and fall, when the weather is much cooler in the morning and warms up quickly as the day goes on.

Put your child’s name on all clothes, and be sure to send an extra change of clothing, including socks. Check the extra clothes in your child’s cubby and adjust appropriately as the weather changes throughout the seasons.

Things from Home

Our resources/materials are carefully selected for the development of the child and for group play. We ask that toys from home not be brought to school. We have found that they set up a competitive situation. If you know your child has a real need for a “lovey” please talk it over with his/her teacher.

Holidays

We believe that holidays are best celebrated within the context of family, homes and places of worship where they can be honored with the respect they so richly deserve. Our classroom is a place where children of all beliefs, cultures, and traditions come together to grow and learn while experiencing traditions common to all.

We encourage children to express themselves using an array of colors and materials without being limited to colors and decorations dictated by the traditions of each holiday. We are a place where children can sing, tell stories, dress up, build blocks, and cook without being confined to songs, stories, and recipes of the “season.” As always our caring and nurturing staff are happy to listen to stories that your children tell and the conversations they have about their own traditions and celebrations.

Classroom Management Policy

Discipline at our school will take the form of positive classroom management, which will:

- Recognize that children are unique individuals and behave and learn in different ways.
- Strive to establish a warm atmosphere of cooperation and trust.
- Strive to help the child become self-controlled, that is, help him/her to experience the intrinsic pleasure in appropriate behavior as opposed to “behaving” just to please adults.
- Encourage children to be independent and to solve their own problems. The teacher will offer assistance when needed and model along the way.
- Provide age and developmentally appropriate equipment, materials and activities.
- State expectations in the positive form, such as, “walk please” vs. “don’t run.”
- Speak to the behavior, not the child, such as, “hitting hurts; let’s find another way to solve this problem” vs. “you are a bad girl for hitting.”
- Respect the child and the child’s belongings, artwork, etc.
- Allow the child to experience the natural and logical consequences of his/her behavior whenever possible. For example: the natural consequence of playing too roughly with friends is that they may not want to play with you. The logical consequence of spilled milk is that you clean it up. A natural consequence requires no outside involvement. A logical consequence needs an adult to follow through.
- Allow the child acceptable means of expressing anger, frustration, sadness, hurt or fear—all of which are honest, healthy emotions. Crying, screaming or hitting a pillow are all acceptable outlets.
- If necessary in order to prevent a child from hurting himself or others or from doing damage to equipment, a teacher will calmly but firmly hold a child to prevent such harm. The child will be held as lovingly as possible with a helpful attitude rather than a punishing or admonishing one.

- After other management techniques have been tried the teacher will limit a child's freedom by asking a child to sit within sight of her. The child may determine when he/she is ready to get up or a short (2-3 minute) time limit may be set.
- Use no corporal (physical) punishment.

Teachers will speak to parents whose child exhibits behaviors that are detrimental to dynamics in the classroom. Together the parents and the teachers will create strategies for improving the situation.

Talking About Children

One aspect of our philosophy is that we try never to talk about children in their presence. We feel that it is disrespectful to the child to behave as if they are not present while discussing them. If you would like to discuss issues about your child, please feel free to call a teacher or choose a moment when your child is otherwise engaged.

For more information on this important topic please see Katherine Reeves article, *Talking About Children in Their Presence*.

Snacks

When you pack snack, please be mindful of your child's health. Please use foods that are as close to their natural state as possible, i.e. fruits and veggies, whole-grain rather than white bread. Please do not send candy, cookies, etc. as it may cause conflict at the table and we cannot guarantee that your child will not eat these items instead of their other snack offerings. As individual snack is available all morning it is not necessary to pack more than 2 items for your child to eat. Children generally eat better when they are not overwhelmed with too many choices

Pack food in containers your child can easily open. Tupperware is perfect. This helps foster independence in the children, frees the teacher from having to open 10 lunchables, 10 juice boxes, 10 "gogurts" (you get the picture), and allows us to send home any uneaten food, so you are aware of what your child eats.

Please pack a child-sized sports bottle filled with water, everyday. Juice boxes are not recommended as they often spill and create a sticky mess. Label the bottle with his name.

Please note:

- We do not have the facilities to refrigerate food, so you may want to use an insulated bag with an ice pack.
- We do not microwave or warm food.
- Please include a napkin, any utensils necessary and a drink.
- Please make sure your child's name is on their lunch box and anything else possible.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SNACKS

Sandwiches

Cut up fruits and vegetables

Canned fruits and vegetables (removed from can)

Cut up cheese

Deviled/boiled eggs

Crackers

Pretzels

Rice cakes

Dry cereal

Cut up meat

Muffins

Raisins and dried fruits

Family of the Week

Parents provide:

Snack for the whole class Monday - Thursday (20 students)

A bunch of flowers (greenery from your garden is fine) on Monday morning.

Take the practical life laundry home (Thursday).

Parents/children are Family of the week on a rotating basis. (2 weeks in the year). When you provide snack please bear in mind only sugar-free and chemical-free foods are recommended. We feel it is important to keep nutritional standards high for our children. Please be aware of food allergies some of our children may have and bring snacks that are safe and good for everyone. A suggestion list of tasty, healthy snacks are made available as well as a list of practical life skill the children will be practicing that week and/or specific cultural foods we would like to try.

Tuition

Please set up online automatic bill payments and make checks payable to The Children's House. A deposit is due on May 1; this is held as the last month's tuition fee and is non-refundable. The next payment is due August 1. Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. This applies during winter vacation and other times when we may not have school on the 1st of the month. If your check is later than the 5th add a \$10.00 late fee to your payment. See tuition policy for details.



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