

# CMS Parent Handbook, 2017-18

parent handbook 2017-18

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**CMS reserves the right to change and/or update this handbook at any time. Parents will be notified when changes are made.**

## PART I: SCHOOL INFO

### About Montessori

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, educator and innovator, who developed an educational approach that builds on the way children naturally learn and develop. A true pioneer, she was the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to graduate from medical school in her native Italy. Dr. Montessori had a keen interest in children and applied scientific methods to the study of their development.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Montessori school, the Casa dei Bambini or Children’s House, opened in Rome in 1907. Following world-wide acclaim for the success of her method, Dr. Montessori travelled the world, writing extensively about her educational method and training others in its use. She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, based on her work regarding education as a means of peace. Dr. Montessori continued her work up until her death in 1952.

There are now more than 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States and Maria Montessori’s method is embraced in at least 110 countries worldwide.

*“It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was.”*

*-Dr. Maria Montessori*

At CMS we wholeheartedly embrace the philosophy and approach of Maria Montessori. We strive to educate children by providing authentic Montessori environments at every developmental level. Children are encouraged to follow their interests, develop their passions and challenge themselves. By combining the work of the hand, the mind and the will, the child will develop into a self-confident, self-disciplined and self-motivated learner.

### MONTESSORI CLASSROOMS HAVE:

- Mixed age groupings that foster peer learning and collaboration
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time which allow for deep concentration
- Student choice of activity
- Specially prepared environments that meet the developmental needs of children
- Materials developed by Dr. Montessori
- Child-centered learning, where the teacher acts as a Guide who prepares the environment and connects the students with it

## About CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 by a group of 13 families seeking to provide Montessori education for their children and others in Georgetown and the surrounding areas. The school has grown and evolved in the intervening years, expanding its programs to include the entire span of childhood and moving in 2001 to its current 18-acre campus.

CMS is a non-profit, tax-exempt private school governed by a Board of Directors. We are licensed by the Association Montessori International Teachers of Texas (AMITOT) and the state of Texas as a child care facility (TDFPS). CMS is also affiliated with AMI (the Association Montessori International), the organization founded by Maria Montessori to ensure the continuity of her method and approach. We follow AMI recommendations regarding class size, program hours, and age groupings. Our classrooms are all equipped with Montessori-trained Guides and the full complement of Montessori materials.

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Recognizing that we live in a diverse and increasingly interconnected world, CMS strives to create a community that reflects and celebrates the full breadth of human diversity, including, but not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, family structure, religious preference, national origin, or disability.

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## Administration & Staff

The CMS Board of Directors establishes policies and directives governing the business and programs of the school and delegates to the Executive Director and school staff the responsibility to see that these policies and directives are appropriately followed. The Board of Directors ensures that school operations are consistent with Montessori philosophy and are in the best interests of its students, parents and teachers.

The Executive Director carries out the broad operational and educational policies established by the Board of Directors and acts within the limits of the financial policy set by that body. The Executive Director:

- Creates operational policies and procedures.
- Works with the Board to develop goals, objectives and plans for the school.
- Provides administrative and professional leadership.
- Orchestrates external relations and functions as Spokesperson for the school.
- Acts as Steward of the school's resources and oversees business operations.
- Administers and evaluates student programs.
- Has overall responsibility for day-to-day operation of the School, including oversight, hiring and termination of all employees.

CMS faculty & staff consists of Montessori certified Classroom Guides, Classroom Assistants, After School Care staff, Substitutes and additional support staff. The Administrative staff consists of the Business Manager, Admissions Manager, Office Coordinator, Facilities Manager, and Bookkeeper.

## Programs

At CMS, we offer programs for children from 8 weeks to 12 years of age. \*Please note that age ranges are an approximate guide. CMS places children based on individual development & readiness.

Montessori Programs: (Monday thru Friday, 8:00 to 3:00)

- Nido: 8 weeks to 18 months
- Casita: 18 months to 3 years
- Children's House: 3 to 6 years
- Lower Elementary: 6 to 9 years
- Upper Elementary: 9 to 12 years

Extended Hours Care: Offered for all age levels.

- Early care (7:15 – 8:15 am)
- After school care (3:00 – 6:00 pm)

Additional Programs offered:

- Summer Camp: Programs are offered for all age levels. Summer camp info is released in February.
- Enrichments: offered for Children's House and Elementary levels. Afterschool activities from 3 to 4pm.
- Holiday Care: offered for all age levels on selected school closure dates.

## Programs

The Montessori method places children in multi-age groupings that span 3 years. For children to experience the full measure of the Montessori approach, it is important that they remain in the environment for the full 3-year Cycle.

### **Nido (children ages 8 weeks to 18 months)**

The name for our infant community is derived from the Italian word meaning nest. It is a homelike environment created to serve the developmental needs of infants, with special attention paid to developing movement and coordination. The Nido & Casita together comprise a 3-year cycle and these Guides are trained for ages 0 to 3 years. Children move to the Casita when they become fully mobile.

### **Casita (children aged 18 months up to 3 years)**

Our Casita environments are designed to meet the developmental needs of toddler-aged children, with an emphasis on language development, caring for oneself and the environment, and mastery of the toileting process. The classroom activities incorporate familiar aspects of the home, such as food preparation and gardening. There are many opportunities for outdoor exploration as well.

### **Children's House (children aged 3 to 6 years)**

The Children's House communities meet the needs of children during their pre-school years. The environments are rich and encourage curiosity and exploration. Classrooms include 5 curriculum areas: practical life, sensorial, math, language and cultural activities. Students enjoy daily opportunities for nature-based outdoor learning. Beginning students nap or rest after lunch while older students "extend" the day with an additional work period before re-joining for outside play at the end of the school day.

### **Elementary Communities (children aged 6 to 9 years & 9 to 12 years)**

The Elementary Montessori curriculum centers around three elements - the mastery of fundamental skills; individually chosen research; and the Great Lessons. The Great Lessons include the story of how the world came to be, the development of life on Earth, the story of humankind, and the development of language, writing, & mathematics. These lessons give students a "cosmic education".

Elementary students have daily opportunities for gardening, nature study and caring for our chickens. Children at this level extend their educational endeavors with field trips and overnight class trips several times a year.

### Extended Hours Care

Extended hours care for children in the Nido and Casita classrooms is an extension of their school day and take place in their classroom environments. For students at the Children's House and Elementary levels, Early care & After school care environments are based on Montessori practices to ensure consistency for the children throughout their day. While they don't have either Montessori materials or trained Guides, the continuation of Montessori practices such as guided choice of activity, individual and small group work, replacing materials after using them, etc. are maintained during these extended program hours. Students enjoy additional recess time, and a variety of art and building materials.

Holiday Care is offered for all age levels and follows the same format as Extended Hours care, with younger children remaining in their familiar class environments and Children's House and Elementary students enjoying the variety of the After school care environments. Summer Camp continues this formatting, with some seasonal additions like water play. Children's House and Elementary students enjoy programmed weekly activities as part of their camp day.

## PART II: HOW IT WORKS (aka School Procedures)

### Animals on campus

Nature and the outdoors are an integral part of healthy development in children and the spacious campus we enjoy at CMS provides ample opportunities for this. The fields and gardens surrounding the school occasionally bring us wild visitors, like rabbits, snakes and a variety of birds. We also have a flock of chickens next to the playground and some classrooms choose to have class pets. Licensing and Health Dept. requirements limit the involvement students can have with the chickens. Only Upper Elementary students help care for them, although we all enjoy their eggs! Small animals kept as classroom pets are seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.

### ARRIVALS FOR 2017-18

Arrival time for ALL students not enrolled in Early Care is 8:00 – 8:15am. Staff members are on hand at the circle drives to greet children and see them safely to their classrooms. Parents are asked to stay in their vehicles while in the circle and not to pass other cars. Stay safe! Please be patient with other children who take an extra minute.

Elementary students use the circle drive at the Upper Elementary classroom for both arrival & departure. Lower level students (Casita & Children's House) use the circle drive by the office. Nido families are asked to park behind the blue building and walk their child into the Nido class through the backyard.

### Late Arrivals

**Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late!** Activities are already underway and they feel left out and behind. Please be on time for school.

**Late Arrivals MUST be taken to the office** and signed in - this applies to ALL students at ALL levels. Please do not drop your child at the circle drive after staff have left the area. We cannot guarantee your child's safety if you do! Elementary students must also sign in late at the office. Please do not drop them at their classroom. Doors are locked at 8:15am.

### Attendance

Daily attendance is taken in every class by 8:30 am. Students arriving after 8:15 am are considered tardy. **Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late!** Activities are already underway and they feel left out and behind. Please be on time for school.

Parents will be contacted about excessive tardys and/or absences. Students with excessive absences may not be able to accomplish minimum requirements for completion of the school year and may be unable to advance to the next level. This decision resides with the Executive Director.

### Birthdays

Birthday celebrations at CMS focus on the child's passage through time rather than parties, cakes, and other traditional birthday things. Parents are respectfully asked to enjoy those activities at home. Your child's Guide will provide specific information on how birthdays are celebrated in their class, as these practices may vary.

Parents may request assistance in distributing invitations for birthday celebrations outside of school, provided every child in the class is invited. Additionally, parents may want to mark the occasion by selecting a gift book from the library wish box and donating it to the school in their child's honor.

### Clothing

In the Montessori classroom, all the materials, furniture, pictures, and books have been carefully selected to create a space conducive to concentration. The clothing worn by the children becomes a part of this "environment" and can affect the children and their behavior. Please do not send your child with clothing or other items that feature movie or video game characters and the like. Valuable or sentimentally important jewelry should be kept safe at home. Equip your child with clothing suitable for the weather, as we go out even when it's cold or damp. **Please label your child's belongings!** Finally, please ensure your child has shoes suitable for running, climbing and other active play.

The following items should be kept for home use:

- Cowboy boots, flip-flops, and dress shoes with high heels
- Buckles, belts, or overalls that require adult assistance to remove
- Necklaces and other dangling jewelry that might catch on something outside
- Super-hero, cartoon, or costume-like clothing such as army camouflage, capes and dance leotards
- Shoes that light up or have wheels embedded in the bottom
- Pull up diapers are not allowed in CMS classrooms



Communication

Good communication between CMS and its families is essential to our mission - school and parents working together to aid the child’s development. The most effective method of communicating with your Guide is via email. During work periods in the classroom, Guides are focused on the children. Most Guides answer emails or return phone calls either during lunch, recess or after school. You can expect a response to your email or phone message within 24 hours.

**If you have an immediate need or message to convey about your child, please call the office.** Calls or emails related to school business will be handled by office staff during office hours. Messages received after 4pm will be answered the following work day.

Families with children enrolled in After school care, who are on campus after office hours, can utilize the cell phones we have for these after care groups. Please use these numbers only for immediate needs.

**AFTER CARE PHONES:**

Nido:  
 Casita (Norma’s):  
 Casita (Krystin’s):  
 Children’s House: (512) 966-3116  
 Elementary: (512) 818-6434

Departure

**Please stow your cell phone during pick up.** Give your full attention to the traffic flow, pedestrians that are about and most of all to your child during this time.

School Day Departure also takes place at the circle drives. All Elementary students depart at the Upper Elementary circle from 3:00 - 3:15pm. Lower levels (Casita & Children’s House) depart from the Office circle drive from 3:00 - 3:15. Half day students in the Casita and Children’s House communities depart from the circle drive at 11:30 a.m. Nido families are asked to park behind the blue building and walk into the Nido class through the back yard to pick up their children.

Parents are asked to remain in their cars and for the safety of the children, not to pass other cars in the departure line. CMS Staff is not allowed to buckle your child. Please do so from your seat or pull into a parking spot if you need to get out of the car. We try to keep things moving as a courtesy to parents waiting in line.

STAY INFORMED

**Weekly Emails**

CMS sends out a weekly email to all families every Tuesday. This is our primary method of communication regarding school events and other important information. Please read your Tuesday email!

**Guide Emails**

Guides also send weekly emails, usually on Fridays. This is the best way to stay up to date on information specific to your child’s classroom.

**CMS Newsletter**

Three times a year, a newsletter is emailed out which has more in-depth news, interesting articles, and info on Montessori in general.

**CMS Website**

The school website is a good source of information such as calendar of school events, links for forms, volunteers needs & opportunities, staff emails and more.

**Facebook & Social Media**

We’re working on it! Office staff is working to expand our school presence in these areas. We appreciate your support by giving positive reviews online of your CMS experience!

Children enrolled in After school care are picked up from the classroom they are in for that time. Parents should park and walk in to get their child. The circular drive is a fire zone so parents should not park there. **Parents must sign out their child before leaving.** Students must be picked up by 6:00 p.m. Please be respectful of staff who work late hours to care for the children. We understand traffic and that things happen. However, late fees are assessed for children who are picked up after their enrolled departure time. Please see the current Tuition & Fees Schedule regarding these charges.

*On your child's enrollment form, there is a section for parents to list individuals (other than parents) that have permission to pick up your child. CMS assumes biological parents have the right to pick up their child from the school, unless we have legal documentation on file stating otherwise. We cannot refuse a parent without this documentation. Giving permission to pick up your child is not the same as authorizing emergency contacts*

If someone other than a parent (or known babysitter) is going to be picking up your child, please make sure they are on your list for authorized pick-up. Send a message to your child's Guide and/or the office relaying who will be picking up your child that day. If the person is unknown to the staff, they will ask to see a photo ID before releasing the child. Please inform the person picking up your child of CMS departure procedures.

### Field Trips & School Trips

Off campus field trips are limited to Elementary classes. Parents will be notified of elementary field trips 5 to 10 days in advance, with details including departure and return times, location, and activities planned. Volunteer drivers are needed to help provide these educational opportunities for the children. Parents wanting to volunteer must submit their driver's license and proof of insurance to the office in September. The driver's car must be equipped with a seat belt for each child. Elementary Guides will provide drivers with maps, first aid supplies, portable fire extinguishers and other equipment and information for the trip.

Full Cycle students in Lower Elementary take an overnight camping trip each year in the spring. Upper Elementary students take overnight trips twice a year (Fall and Spring) that are planned for the whole class. UE Students also have the option of participating in the Montessori Model United Nations program, which includes a trip to New York City as the culmination of the program. Some financial assistance is available for this program. Parents in these classrooms will receive additional information from the Guide on any school-sponsored trips.

### Items Brought to/from School

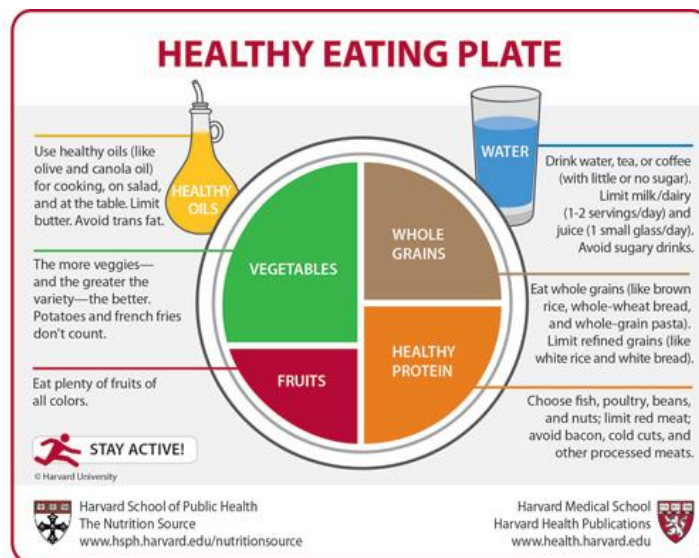
Our Montessori environments are thoughtfully prepared for the children and completely intact! Please refrain from allowing your child to bring toys, books and other items not requested by your child's Guide to school. Guides provide class orientation information, which includes any items children need to bring or keep at school. Other items should remain at home or in the car. If an item from home does find its way to school accidentally, Guides will ask

the child to store it in their lunchbox for the day or will hold on to it for them if need be. Often time, such items coming into the classroom are a distraction and create difficulties for staff and children when they get broken or misplaced. If your child asks to bring an item to share at school, please do not allow them to do so without expressed permission from the Guide.

On occasion, school items, such as Pink Tower cubes, golden beads, etc. find their way home. Because each of these items plays a specific and important role in the educational environment, we ask that parents please return them promptly. AMI standards require us to remove incomplete items from the shelf so the material is not available for students until the item is returned. We thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation with this!

## Lunch & Snacks

Lunch at CMS is a relaxed social experience, a time to enjoy pleasant conversation and good food. Good nutrition is important to sustain children throughout their active day at school. Please avoid sending foods that are primarily empty calories in your child’s lunch box and limit the amount of sugar they consume at school. Sugary sweets should not be included in the lunch box. To ensure the safety of any students or staff with food allergies, **CMS is a nut-free campus.** The children’s work at school is directly affected by the nutritional quality of their meals so please provide your child with a nutritious breakfast each morning in addition to sending a nutritious lunch for them at school. CMS provides water at lunchtime for the children to drink. Please do not send additional drinks. Now is the time to educate kids about making good choices. The Harvard “Healthy Eating Plate” is a great example!



Children’s House and Elementary classes have special in-class lunches periodically. Your child’s Guide will provide more information about these. Cultural lunches are a tradition at CMS. They provide an opportunity for students to explore the tastes of other cultures. In the Elementary, the children choose at country they are interested in researching and host a lunch in celebration of what they learned. In Children’s House classrooms, the parents and Guide take a more active role in preparing and presenting the cultural lunch for the children.

In the Casita classes, adults and children prepare lunches for the community daily. Parents are asked to volunteer to bring groceries for the week's meals. Guides will provide specific information in the classroom orientation. Nido families work together with the Guide and staff to provide the right foods for the child at the stage they are currently in.

Healthy snack choices are offered in the Children's House communities during the morning work period. Parents are asked to volunteer to bring groceries for the week and students help to prepare the snack. Guides will provide more detailed information for the parents in their classrooms in the classroom orientation. Elementary students may bring additional food in their lunchboxes to be eaten as a snack during the morning work period.

### Observations

Classrooms are open for observations starting in October and parents are encouraged to visit at least once or twice a year. Observations are for 30-45 minutes and can be scheduled through the front office. We have guidelines for observers. Please check in at the office before going to the classroom. Our classrooms are also open for observations by teachers, college students, prospective parents and the like. We ask that all observers respect each child's work and development by not discussing your observations of other parents' children, as per the Confidentiality Policy.

### Parent Conferences

Parent-Guide conferences are scheduled twice a year, in Fall and Spring. A day on our calendar is set aside for these meetings so that parents and Guides can stay abreast of the child's progress. Parents can request additional conference times with Guides at any time.

### Safe Environment Policy

There are many ways to foster the development of children who are in the process of forming their personal identities. The focus at CMS is to provide students with the experience of a true community and help them recognize how to assert their individuality while existing harmoniously within the group. The school environment allows both space and resources for

children to work out this balance. A child exhibiting violent or threatening behavior will be immediately corrected and will remain with the adult until he or she is able to return to working safely. If the behavior is repeated, the child will be removed from the classroom. The child will be allowed to return to the community only after he/she has regained self-control and understands how his/her behavior needs to change to be safe in the community.

When an incident occurs, the Executive Director will be informed of the child's behavior and a written summary of the incident recorded on a CMS Incident Report. Parents will receive a copy of the report and a phone call or email from the Guide. **It is CMS policy that repeated violent or threatening behavior requires the child to leave school for the day.**

If a child is asked to leave school, a meeting must be called to discuss the situation. The child's Guide, parents, and the Executive Director must attend. At this meeting, it will be made clear to all parties that should the behavior be repeated, the next step may be suspension or expulsion. The Executive Director reserves the right to suspend or expel a student or family from the school at any time for any reason. Our goal is to ensure that each child has a safe environment in which to work and learn. These measures are in place to achieve that goal.

Parents should also note that in accordance with Texas Penal Code, the CMS grounds are a gang-free zone and any criminal offenses related to such are reported to law enforcement immediately.

### Transitions

The Montessori environments at CMS are tailored to the developmental needs of children during specific phases of growth. When a child nears the age at which we would expect them to transition to the next classroom level, Guides, in coordination with the Executive Director and Admissions Manager, observe the child to determine their readiness for transitioning. The child's current Guide will discuss with parents these observations and the transition timeline

## Solid Ground Program

One of the many benefits of Montessori education is that children can learn at an individual pace and classrooms can support a wide range of learning styles. Montessori materials offer information to children through a variety of senses and activities.

There are occasions however, when a child does not seem to be thriving in one or more areas of development. To determine if they are functioning well in the classroom, we ask:

- Can the child make independent work choices?
- Is the child a peaceful, respectful member of the community?
- Does the child have healthy social relationships within the classroom community?
- Does the child work without disturbing others?

If we can answer yes to these questions but still have concerns about the child's progress, we may ask for additional support through the Solid Ground program, which is designed to help students benefiting from Montessori yet struggling in one or more academic areas. The Learning Specialist will assist the child with individualized tutoring and other recommendations.

If we answer no to these questions is no, it may be that CMS is not able to serve the needs of that child.

The Solid Ground program cannot aid individuals with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, ADHD, significant Autistic tendencies, severe hearing or visual impairments or physical/occupational therapeutic needs beyond the scope and expertise of our staff.

and plans. Children moving between levels have a series of visits with their new Guide and classroom before the transition is made.

## PART III: HEALTH & SAFETY

### Cell Phones & Driving on Campus

**Cell phones must be stowed while driving on the CMS campus.** Please drive safely when approaching or leaving the school. Pleasant Valley Drive is a residential street with a speed limit of 30 miles per hour. The school drive has a speed limit of 20 miles per hour. Please be attentive around school parking areas and driveways for any children or parents who may be walking to and from the parking lot.

### Emergency Procedures

**Medical:** Should a medical emergency or major injury requiring emergency medical attention occur while the child is at school, the staff will give appropriate First Aid and call 911. Parents will be notified after 911 is called. If transport to a hospital is required, the CMS Director or other staff member will accompany the child and stay with them until parents arrive at the hospital. If a child has a severe (anaphylactic) allergic reaction and does not have an EpiPen at the school, CMS staff will call 911. If staff members are instructed by EMS to administer Benadryl, we will do so immediately. Parents will be notified after 911 is called.

CMS provides accident insurance for all children injured while at CMS. Information is available through the office. Qualifying injuries must be reported to the office.

**Building:** Building emergencies include fire, gas leak or any situation that makes the school buildings unsafe for children. In the event of a building emergency, staff will evacuate children following the posted evacuation routes and call 911. If responders determine that it is not safe for children to re-enter the buildings, parents will be notified via email and our automated notification system to pick up their child. Staff and students at CMS regularly practice responding to building emergencies and consistent measures will be taken in the event of an actual emergency.

**Weather:** Staff and students at CMS regularly practice responding to severe weather emergencies and each building on our campus is equipped with an emergency weather radio. In the event of a weather emergency, all persons on campus are immediately moved to a “safe zone” to await further instruction. If children are outdoors when a severe weather event occurs, they move indoors to the closest location.

If severe weather prevents students and staff from safely traveling to school and a closure is necessary, parents will be notified by email and our automated notification system that school will not be held that day. CMS follows the lead of public schools in the Georgetown/Round Rock area in determining if closure is necessary. This information is usually available via local radio and television stations.

### Illness & Medications

**Illness:** Young children are in the process of developing their immune system and tend to get sick more frequently than adults. A child who is ill, contagious or has been diagnosed with a communicable disease should stay home from school until they are not contagious anymore. This is appreciated by all your fellow parents!



## Conditions for Sending or Keeping a Child home sick:

- Oral temperature of above 101 degrees or Armpit temperature of above 100 degrees, accompanied by behavioral changes or other symptoms of illness
- Diagnosis by a health-care professional of a communicable disease that excludes the child from attending school
- Symptoms & signs of illness including uncontrolled diarrhea or 2 or more vomiting episodes within 24 hours.
- If the child has an illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in school activities, including outdoor play
- If the illness requires a need for care beyond that which CMS staff can provide without compromising the safety, health and supervision of other students

**A CHILD MUST BE FEVER AND/OR SYMPTOM FREE FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE RETURNING TO SCHOOL**

### HEAD LICE

- If a child is identified to have head lice, the child must be treated at home and all signs of head lice removed before returning to school
- A child identified with head lice at school will be separated from other children and parents will be called to pick up the child
- Treatment information is provided by the office for any children identified as having head lice

**A CHILD WHO HAS HAD HEAD LICE MUST BE EXAMINED BY CMS STAFF PRIOR TO RETURNING TO CLASS. Parents should wait in the office until their child has been cleared to attend school.**

If a child becomes ill while at school, parents will be called to pick up the child immediately. If the child has fever or symptoms of communicable disease they must be separated from other children until a parent picks them up. **A child must be fever free or on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.**

Staff at CMS emphasize the importance of hand-washing and direct children to cover coughs and sneezes. Classroom surfaces are cleaned regularly with disinfectant to prevent the spread of germs. All adults, including parents, should emphasize hand-washing with children, as it is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness.

**Medications:** Medication should never be sent to school with a child or placed in a child's lunchbox. All medications are stored in the office for the safety of the children. If a child has had an allergic reaction and an EpiPen prescribed, the EpiPen is kept in the child's classroom, out of reach of students, and taken to the playground when the child goes to recess.

If possible, medication should be given to a child by a parent at home. If a child must have medication during school hours, the following procedures are followed:

- Prescription medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions or dosage, and the physician's name.
- Non-prescriptive medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to school.
- Parents must request in writing that staff members administer the medication. Parents bring the medication to the office and fill out the Medication Form authorizing staff to administer medicine.

### Injuries

All staff members employed at CMS have current certification in CPR and First Aid. If your child is injured while at school, appropriate First Aid will be administered and an Incident Report describing the injury will be completed and sent home. Sometimes minor injuries, such as bumping into something, may be treated but not recorded. If you have specific questions about an unrecorded minor injury, please contact your child's Guide. If the injury results in a medical emergency, CMS will follow emergency procedures in handling the incident. Copies of Incident Reports sent home are kept in the child's file in the office.

Safety Drills & Procedures

Safety is a priority at our school. We make all possible effort to keep our grounds, building and practices consistent with those promoting the safety of the children. CMS is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, Health Department and state child care licensing agency. In addition, CMS staff conducts playground checks, monthly fire drills and weather/building emergency drills at least four times during the school year. Evacuation routes are posted in all buildings and staff are trained in safety and emergency procedures annually.

**PART IV: PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Volunteers & Volunteer Hours

Parent involvement is a key component in building a strong community and vital to the academic and social success of our children. At CMS we have many ways for parents to be involved and we encourage you to find what fits. **All families are asked to contribute 25 service or volunteer hours each school year.** Volunteerism can take many forms, from buying groceries for your child’s class for a week to working in the school library for a morning. We are listing here some of the many opportunities for getting involved. Parents are encouraged also to stay informed about other opportunities that may arise throughout the year.

Committees

CMS has a number of parent-led Committees that meet regularly to address areas of need and coordinate special events and activities for the school. Interested parents are encouraged to sign up! Even if you can’t attend Committee meetings, you will receive updates on events and activities the committee is undertaking. Current committees include:



Events

**Parent information events** are held periodically on a variety of topics, some are classroom or age-specific and others are open to the entire school. We encourage your attendance. Hours spent at these events count towards the 25 requested service hours for every family.

- CMS 101 - provides an overview of the school and informs parents of policies and procedures in place at CMS. Required for new families but open to all.
- The Montessori Journey - is held at CMS every fall. While it is especially engaging for new families, returning families are also encouraged to attend and see again this unique view of the Montessori spectrum.



- Montessori Mornings - are held monthly after drop offs. Topics range from Developmental Milestones to Financial planning for parents. Upcoming events are listed in the Tuesday email and on the CMS website calendar.
- 5 Going on 6 - focuses on the final year of the primary environment and its crucial role in bringing together all that the child has absorbed previously.
- The Elementary Experience - is a hands-on workshop for parents to see how the Montessori materials engage students in the Elementary years.

**Other school events** include the Fall International Festival, Holiday concerts and gatherings, Community Building Days and, our biggest event, the annual Spring Auction fundraiser. Parents involved in planning and pulling these off can count their efforts towards volunteer hours. Parent involvement is essential in bringing these fun events to our school!

### Fundraising & Donations

CMS strives to keep tuition affordable so as to offer Montessori education to a wide range of families. Tuition and fees cover the basic expenses of the school. Fundraising is undertaken to improve and expand our campus, facilities and programs; to provide scholarships to students; pay for professional development for our Guides and other staff; and offer special educational opportunities like the Montessori Model UN program.

Our school is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and all donations made to the school are tax deductible. Many local employers offer matching and parents are encouraged to take advantage of their generosity.

The Parents Page of our website provides a list of fundraising & donation opportunities that are currently underway at CMS. Some, such as collecting Box Tops for Education, are ongoing and fun for the children to be involved with. Others, such as collecting items for our annual Spring Auction, or donating to the CMS Annual Fund, are one-time requests. All are hugely appreciated by the staff and students at CMS!

### Volunteer Drivers

Staff or parents who volunteer to provide transportation for a field trip or other school function must submit the necessary information for the school to approve them as a driver by September 15th. This includes an MVR report. If the school finds that a staff member or parent has received 3 or more moving violations within a 3-year period, that person will not be permitted to transport children for any CMS function. If a staff member or parent driver receives or has received a citation for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol or illegal narcotics, they will not be permitted to transport children for any CMS function. Driving records are updated annually and all drivers are required to provide current proof of insurance.

## PART V: SCHOOL POLICIES

### Confidentiality & Ethics

Adults working with children provide guidance and act as role models for behaviors such as courtesy, kindness, and respectful words. CMS staff members and volunteers who work with children are obligated to act in ways that we would wish the children to

emulate. All CMS staff members and volunteers should be aware that any and all information seen, overheard, or observed is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone not authorized to receive that information. When questions arise regarding confidentiality, please contact the Executive Director for guidance and clarification.

### Conflict Resolution

The CMS Conflict Resolution policy demonstrates our commitment to attempting to settle differences by focusing on basic interests and mutually satisfying options and acknowledging the respective rights and responsibilities of all those involved. This process allows for open discussion of disputes without retaliation.

The first step is the timely discussion of the problem between the parties involved. For example - parents concerned with classroom operations or Guide responsibilities should first discuss their concerns with the Guide directly. The two parties are encouraged to resolve the problem together. If the parties cannot reach a mutually-satisfying result, then either party may inform the Executive Director who will assist in resolution, by meeting with both parties to discuss concerns and offer solutions. If the conflict is between CMS staff members, the parties will attempt to resolve the conflict by meeting to discuss and/or meeting with the Executive Director to find a solution. Confidentiality regarding the conflict and steps taken to resolve it is expected from all parties involved.

If the situation is still unresolved after the above steps are taken, a letter may be sent to the CMS Board of Directors. The Board will discuss the situation and respond with how they feel best to proceed.

### Child Abuse & Neglect

If a CMS employee or volunteer has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or a law enforcement agency within 48 hours. This report may be done anonymously or the individual reporting may elect to inform the Executive Director.

To prevent acts of abuse or neglect at school, all employees undergo a criminal history check and fingerprinting, which includes a search of the central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Staff at CMS also receive annual training in the recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect; as well as positive discipline methods and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service Minimum Standards for care givers. Expectations for employees working with children at CMS are also conveyed in the CMS Staff Handbook and during pre-service training.

### Drug & Alcohol Policy

Community Montessori School must and will be free of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances at all times that children are present. Alcohol may be served at adult functions on the CMS campus outside of school operating hours when childcare is not offered and no children are present.

CMS reserves the right to request drug and/or alcohol screening from any employee or volunteer that appears to be under the influence of such substances while on CMS grounds

during the school day. The Executive Director has the right to send home any staff member or volunteer suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

### Harrassment

CMS maintains an environment free of harassment and intimidation for all staff and volunteers. The school has a zero-tolerance policy for vulgar, abusive, humiliating or threatening language or other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. CMS will not tolerate the harassment of any employee or non-employee by another employee or non-employee or Board member for any reason. Employee violators of this policy are subject to immediate termination. Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to immediate expulsion from CMS grounds. Furthermore, CMS may report violators to the appropriate authority. Any harassment observed or experienced should be reported promptly to the Executive Director.

## CONTACT NUMBERS

### **TDFPS Contact Information**

Our local licensing office for the Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services is located in Round Rock and can be reached at 512-388-6200 or on the web at: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us). Parents may ask to view a copy of the TDFPS Minimum Standards at any time. A copy is kept in the school office and available through the Office Coordinator. It is also available on the above website. **Parents may also view our most recent inspection report, which is posted in the office workroom.**

### **Child Abuse Hotline**

The Child Abuse reporting hotline number is 1-800-252-5400.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

**In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.**

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to:

USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights

Room 326- W, Whitten Building

14th and INDEPENDENCE Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20250-9410

Or call 202-720-5964. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**CMS reserves the right to change and/or update this handbook at any time.**