



COMMUNITY
MONTESSORI SCHOOL
- est. 1981 -

Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Welcome! To all of our new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome for the 2023-2024 school year. We are so happy you have chosen Community Montessori School and are honored to be partners with you in the education of your child.

This Parent Handbook contains information about our school policies and procedures. It's important that you read it thoroughly and keep it handy for any questions that might come up over the course of the year. Note that in the interest of conciseness, CMS uses "parent" throughout this handbook to refer to any parent or legal guardian of a student. The handbook is available on the parent page of our website at www.community-montessori.org.

A Montessori education fosters a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. We look forward to a wonderful year filled with joy and growth for your child and hope you are excited to be a Montessori parent!

revised 7/10/23

The mission of Community Montessori School is to provide authentic Montessori education in a nature-rich environment that cultivates collaboration, curiosity, love of learning, and respect for oneself, others, and the world.

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GENERAL

About CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 by a group of parents who wanted Montessori education for their children. The school moved to our Pleasant Valley location in 2000. We are proud of our history and our beautiful 18-acre campus. CMS is a nonprofit 501c3 organization. Our Board of Directors establishes the policies and directives governing the school and delegates to the Executive Director the implementation of them, consistent with Montessori philosophy and the best interest of students, families and staff members.

At CMS we wholeheartedly embrace the Montessori approach. We are affiliated with AMI (the Association Montessori Internationale), which is the organization founded by Dr. Montessori to preserve the legacy of her vision, and are a member school of both [AMI-USA](#) and AMITOT (AMI Teachers of Texas). We are also licensed by the state as a childcare facility and comply with all state regulations and requirements. CMS follows AMI guidelines for best Montessori practices in regards to class size, age groupings, staffing, classroom materials, and practices.

The Montessori Approach

Dr. Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, educator, and innovator who developed an educational philosophy based on the way children naturally learn and develop. She opened the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907. Following worldwide acclaim for the success of her method, Dr. Montessori traveled extensively, advocating for children and giving voice to a new perspective on education, until her death in 1952. There are more than 5,000 Montessori schools in the US and the Montessori method is embraced in more than 100 countries worldwide.

At CMS, our mission is to provide authentic Montessori education. We have a deep respect for children as unique individuals and our priority is the development of the whole child, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. We follow AMI guidelines in providing:

- Prepared classroom environments tailored to specific age levels
- Mixed age communities that foster collaboration and peer learning
- Child initiated choice of activity within the guidelines of the community
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time which cultivate deep concentration
- A guide trained in the Montessori method and certified for the age level of the class
- An appropriate number of children to foster social development

Diversity & Nondiscrimination Statement

At CMS, we celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all. Our diverse community forms a rich environment that is a crucial part of educating children on their path to maturity and global citizenship. Our interactions across our entire school community are characterized by guiding principles of respect, equity, inclusion, humanity, peace and personal responsibility.

CMS prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, gender identity or expression of any other characteristic protected by law. This policy applies to all aspects of the school, including but not limited to employment, admissions, educational activities, and the administration of school policies and procedures.

“The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The Montessori child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.”

- Maria Montessori

PROGRAMS

Montessori Class Levels

CMS classroom communities are organized to reflect the developmental stages described by Dr. Montessori. More information on specific class levels can be found on the [CMS Website](#).

- Casita (AMI's Infant Community level) - for children 12 to 15 months up to 3 years
- Children's House level - for children 2.5 to 3 years up to 6 years
- Lower Elementary - for children from 6 to 9 years (first - third grade)
- Upper Elementary - for children from 9 to 12 years (fourth - sixth grade)
- Adolescent - for children from 12 to 15 years (seventh - eighth grade)

Additional Programs

Extended Hours: CMS offers limited extended hours care before and after the school day. These programs supplement the Montessori day and, while consistent in principles like mixed ages and choice of activity, they are not staffed by Montessori guides and do not include use of Montessori materials. **Pre-registration is required.** Early Care provides extended hours before school, where students may arrive between 7:30 and 7:50 a.m. After Care provides extended hours after school, where students may be picked up between 3:15 and 5:15 p.m.

Summer Camp: CMS offers a summer camp each year in June & July, with a blend of outdoor play and themed activities. Registration information is sent out in January. Summer camp is open to currently enrolled students. Alumni and siblings of current students may register as space allows.

Enrichments: Enrichment classes are offered after school for students in the Children's House and Elementary levels. Registration information is sent to parents in the weekly Tuesday e-newsletter. Please note that CMS partners with others to provide these optional programs. While we vet them and work hard to ensure their alignment with the CMS mission, those partners are responsible for content and activities.

Admissions & Class Placement

Admissions, including class placements and start dates, are coordinated by the CMS Director of Enrollment & Outreach. CMS is fortunate to have an entire faculty of outstanding, certified Montessori educators. Each classroom community upholds Montessori standards and has a full array of Montessori materials. Classroom placements are carefully considered and planned by our administrative team. It is important for parents to trust the judgment inherent in this process. Placements are made at the sole discretion of Community Montessori School. Enrollment cannot be contingent upon a particular classroom or guide. Admissions questions should be directed to the Director of Enrollment & Outreach.

Student Transitions

Student transitions are planned by our administration and coordinated by the Director of Enrollment & Outreach, with input from the Executive Director, guides and parents. The process typically includes observations and orientation meetings for parents, and visits for students. In general, student transitions take place within the following time frames:

- Casita to Children's House - between 2.5 and 3 years
- Children's House Nap to Children's House Extended Day - between 3.5 and 4.5 years
- Children's House to Lower Elementary - upon completion of year three in the Children's House classroom, typically at the start of the school year in August
- Lower Elementary to Upper Elementary - upon completion of year three in Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary to Adolescent - upon completion of year three in Upper Elementary

Learning Support Services

The Montessori method is known for offering a multi-sensory approach where individuals learn at their own pace. Our classrooms accommodate a range of ages and provide a variety of opportunities for concepts to be learned in different ways. When students experience difficulties or are not progressing, their guide will first look for ways to address the situation in class. If classroom interventions do not result in progress over a given period of time, the guide will discuss the issue with parents and request assistance from CMS Administration. Learning Support Services at CMS focus on early intervention, assisting parents and students undergoing formal evaluations and/or assessments, and coordinating support for learners within the Montessori environment.

If a student needs support beyond what we can offer in the classroom, CMS will request that parents seek outside assistance. This may include speech therapy, ADHD assessment, dyslexia evaluation or other such services. We ask families engaging in outside services to fully disclose results to our administration and staff, so that we can provide appropriate classroom support. If a requested assessment or service is not obtained and the school feels that the child's needs cannot be met by our program, CMS reserves the right to terminate enrollment or withdraw re-enrollment options for that student.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

School Hours

CMS Hours of Operation are 7:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.

- Office hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- School Day: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Before School Care: 7:30 a.m. to 8 a.m.
- After School Care: 3 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

Addressing Staff

CMS employees are addressed by first names. This policy is in keeping with Montessori principles and practices. It fosters relationships, removes language barriers, helps children feel more confident in approaching adults, and engenders mutual respect which is a cornerstone of our school mission. All staff at CMS should be addressed by first name, without the use of honorifics or other formal titles.

Attendance & Absences

Classroom staff take attendance each morning after arrival. If your child will be absent, please email attendance@community-montessori.org. Regular attendance is vital to your child's growth and development. The CMS calendar has scheduled days off during the fall, winter and spring. Families are asked to plan trips and vacations during these school breaks. If a student has an excessive number of absences, your guide will contact you to discuss. Excessive absences can have a detrimental impact on the child's progress and may jeopardize a student's continuing enrollment.

Arrival & Departure

CMS utilizes a car line system for arrival and departure. Our first priority is safety. Our second is getting cars through the line in a timely manner. **Do not pass other vehicles in the car line.** Your parent orientation packet includes car tags and a map with instructions. The car tags help us direct traffic - we appreciate your cooperation in making them visible in your car. Drivers must stay inside their vehicle. We have multiple lanes of traffic and this is for everyone's safety. **Drivers on our campus are expected to keep their cell phones stowed and follow speed limits.** If someone

besides yourself will be dropping off or picking up your child, please inform them of our procedures.

Arrival is from 8 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. CMS staff are on hand in the lower circle drive to greet children and see them safely from car to classroom. Adolescent students are dropped off at their classroom door in the upper circle drive. After 8:20 a.m., students are considered tardy and must be dropped off at the school office. Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late. The arrival routine helps your child feel a part of the community by starting the day alongside their peers. Please do your best to be on time. **Late arrivals MUST check in at the front office.**

Departure is from 3 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Students are seated at the benches outside and walked by staff to their car. We love to wave and say hello but we must keep our attention on the safety of students and want to be considerate of everybody's time, so please refrain from lengthy conversations in the car line. Adolescent students may be picked up from their classroom door in the upper circle drive.

If you are late to pick up your child, **late fees will be assessed** based on time of pick up, as stated on the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule. A staff member will wait with your child. If you are more than 5 minutes late, your child may be taken to After School Care, if space allows, or to the office.

Extended Hours Programs require parents to walk directly to the assigned room to sign their student in or out. Families enrolled in Early Care may arrive anytime between 7:30 a.m. and 7:50 a.m. After 7:50 a.m., you will need to join the car line for arrival, as students are already on their way to class. Families enrolled in After care may pick up anytime between 3:15 p.m. and 5:15 p.m. Please be respectful of our staff and pick up your child on time. Late fees will be assessed after 5:15 p.m., as specified on the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule.

Authorized Pick-Up Persons

Enrollment forms ask parents to list individuals who have permission to pick up their child from school. CMS assumes biological parents have this right, unless we have legal documentation on file saying otherwise. Giving authorization to pick up your child is not the same as an emergency contact. Please contact the CMS Director of Enrollment & Outreach if clarification is needed.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child, they must be listed as an Authorized Pick-Up Person on your child's enrollment form. If this person is unknown to our staff, they may be asked to show a photo ID. To add or remove a person from your child's Authorized Pick-Up list, please call the CMS office. A CMS staff member cannot be listed as an Authorized Pick-up Person without a signed release waiver on file in the office.

Communication & Contact Info

The main number for the school is 512-863-7920. Our office is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Messages received after office hours will be answered the following school day. Families with children enrolled in After Care may contact CMS staff after office hours by dialing the main number and entering the class extension code at the prompt. Please note that After Care staff are caring for students so please keep these calls brief.

- Up-to-date contact information - Having correct phone numbers and email addresses for family members is very important. Please contact our office if you need to update your family's information.
- Emergency messaging service - We use a text messaging system to contact parents in the event of a weather closure or other emergency situation. All parents are automatically added and cannot opt out.
- School directory - Families have the option of participating in the CMS Directory for their child's class, to facilitate social engagements amongst classmates and families at our

school. Parents participating are expected to respect the purpose of this directory and not use it for solicitations, negative gossip, and the like.

- Communicable illness alerts are emailed to families when their child has been exposed to a communicable illness (these notifications are required by state authorities).

Parents with questions about classroom activities or other subjects specific to their child, should email their child's guide directly. You can expect a response within 24 hours, or in the case of a weekend or holiday, the end of the next school day. The [CMS website](#) and [Facebook page](#) are additional resources for school calendars, events, and information, including this handbook!

Conference Days & Observations

Conference Days are scheduled twice a year, in the fall and spring. The school is closed for a day so parents and guides can meet and discuss student progress. Printed and/or digital conference reports are provided to families and are added to the student's file. Additional meetings, Zoom calls or phone calls may be requested by families and/or guides at other times during the year, when concerns or questions arise.

Observations are scheduled through the CMS office, beginning in October. This is a lovely way to share in your child's education. Observations are available for Children's House, Elementary, and Adolescent levels for a 30-minute period during the morning work time. Observers check in at the office and receive a visitor's badge and observation guidelines before being walked to class. Observations are also available for CMS staff, Montessori teacher-trainees, and outside specialists. All observers are expected to respect the privacy of our students. Photography and cell phone use are not permitted.

Photo Permissions

CMS staff members occasionally take photos and/or video recordings of students at school. During enrollment, parents are given the option of having photos shared with them, via Transparent Classroom. Photos are used in the CMS yearbook, which is published every spring and available for families to purchase. CMS may also use photos on our website, in school-wide emails, social media platforms, and in printed marketing materials. Children's names are never published alongside their photographs externally. Questions about photo permissions should be sent to our Director of Enrollment & Outreach.

Please be aware that other parents may take photographs of your child during class socials, field trips, festivals, or other school-related activities. CMS cannot control the extent to which other parents share such photographs on social media or in other forums, and assumes no liability for any such publications.

Parent Participation

When schools and families work as partners, students flourish. There are many ways for parents to be involved at CMS. The most important ones are simple - read communications from the school and stay up-to-date on CMS news, attend parent conferences, and ask your child about their day! CMS families are asked to contribute 20 volunteer hours each school year. Parents learn about volunteer opportunities at Parent Orientation and in weekly email communications. Like to garden? Volunteer to help your child's guide with their backyard space. Enjoy meeting new families? Volunteer to be a Class Ambassador. Are you a bookworm at heart? Help with the CMS Library. *Please note that volunteers working with students are required to have a background check on file in our office.* Parents, volunteers, and other visitors to our campus are all expected to abide by CMS policies, procedures and guidelines, including our code of conduct.

Code of Conduct

Courteous respectful behavior is expected from all members of the CMS community, including parents. Parking and traffic rules must be followed. Confidentiality and respect for the privacy of

children, families, and staff is essential. All CMS parents and volunteers should be aware that any information seen or heard at school is confidential.

Zero Tolerance Policy: CMS has zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination of any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, political affiliation, disability or ethnicity. Violators of this policy are subject to immediate expulsion and CMS may report violators to the appropriate authority.

Conflict Resolution

When differences arise between parents or parents and staff, the CMS Conflict Resolution policy calls for direct communication with the goal of a mutually satisfying resolution. Confidentiality is expected from all involved. The use of broadcast emails to engage others about sensitive issues involving a child or family, CMS staff member, or school policy or procedure is inappropriate and may result in termination of enrollment. Parents who have concerns about the behavior of another student at CMS should follow procedures outlined in the Student Behavior Issues section. Conflicts with CMS staff members, families, or students should be discussed directly and respectfully by the parties involved. If resolution cannot be attained, the situation should be brought directly to the Executive Director. If the conflict or concern is with the Executive Director, the CMS Board President will take the lead on resolving the conflict.

CLASSROOM OPERATIONS

What to Bring/Keep at School

The following are general guidelines for all CMS students. Students at different age levels will have different items to bring or keep at school. Your orientation packet will detail items for your child's class and your child's guide will discuss specifics at Parent Orientation.

Food: All students at CMS bring their own lunch to school daily. Healthy eating is important to sustain active children throughout their day and promote healthy physical development. CMS is a **no/low sugar campus**. Please limit the amount of sugar students consume at school and reserve sweets for home. Educate your child about making healthy food choices. The [Harvard Healthy Eating Plate](#) is a great place to start - the habits your child develops now will last a lifetime! School lunches should include healthy choices such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and protein. Avoid pre-packaged, processed items. Please show your love and care for the environment by sending food in reusable containers and striving for zero-waste lunches. **CMS is a peanut-free campus**. To ensure safety for our students with food allergies, individual classrooms may have bans on additional food items and this will be communicated to families by the office. Students with food allergies must have an Allergy Action Plan on file in our office (See the Health & Safety section for more information.) Food preferences (such as vegan) or sensitivities (such as lactose intolerance) are addressed individually. Please be sure to include this information in your enrollment forms, so we can fully address your child's needs.

Water Bottles: All CMS students must bring a reusable water bottle, labeled with their name, every day. Filtered water is available in every classroom for refills. Please do not send juice boxes, Gatorade, milk, or other beverages to school.

Insect Repellent/Sunscreen: Students at CMS enjoy ample time outdoors. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent before coming to school. If you would like to send something to be applied at school, you must send the item in its original container with your child's first and last name clearly marked.

Storage of student belongings: All CMS students have a cubby or drawer to store their personal

items at school. Specifics vary by level and are discussed at Parent Orientation. Work produced at school is stored in your child's cubby or drawer and finished items are sent home periodically. Children who nap at school have a storage space for nap items, and we launder these weekly at school. Clothing items that are soiled at school are sent home at the end of the day to be laundered. Please label everything you send to school.

Clothing & Jewelry

The Montessori approach centers around specially prepared environments that foster concentration and engagement. The clothing worn by children at school becomes a part of the environment and can have an influence on behavior during class time. Please do not send your child with items that may be distracting to themselves or other children. The following items should be enjoyed at home:

- Clothing that features characters from movies or video games
- Items associated with pretend play like capes, camouflage, etc.
- Shoes that light up, have wheels, or a high heel that may inhibit movement
- Necklaces, bracelets, scarves, or other items that may pose a choking or safety hazard
- Valuable or sentimental jewelry items that may get lost at school
- **Diapers, including pull-ups, are not allowed at CMS**

Please label your child's clothing. Laundry markers or sharpies work well. [Mabel's Labels](#) are inexpensive and durable. They are also a fundraiser for CMS and are highly recommended by our parents. Please include your child's *full name* - initials are not always enough to identify items. Younger students at CMS should wear clothing they can manage independently. Overalls, leggings, buckles and the like are not always manageable for young children learning to use the toilet on their own. Your child's guide will discuss further at Parent Orientation. Children should come to school equipped for the weather. Our students go outside even when it's cold or wet.

Birthdays & Holidays

Birthdays are celebrated Montessori style at CMS! We focus on the child's passage through time rather than traditional birthday customs like cake and candles. Parents are respectfully asked to enjoy those things at home. Families wishing to invite classmates to a birthday celebration are asked to use the School Directory for this purpose. Please do not send invitations with your child to school. Class Ambassadors or office staff can assist in sending evites to the whole class only.

The CMS Library has a tradition of "Birthday Books," which are donated by students in honor of their birthday. Books selected reflect the need of the CMS Library and are available for purchase in the office. A placard acknowledging the donation is placed inside the book. Your donation to our library is greatly appreciated!

Our school community is a wonderful tapestry of ethnicities, religions, and cultural identities. All are welcomed and respected. Students at CMS learn about customs and traditions around the world. We do not host parties or celebrations for specific holidays during school. Celebrations at CMS are geared toward school and student events instead. For instance, we host a "Moving Up" ceremony to acknowledge students transitioning to the next developmental level, but we don't have Halloween costume parties or exchange Valentines in class. Your child's guide will provide more specific information at Parent Orientation.

Animals on Campus

We are fortunate at CMS to enjoy a beautiful 18-acre campus. Nature and time outdoors are an important part of healthy development for children and our spacious campus provides ample opportunities. The fields and gardens at CMS occasionally bring wild visitors like rabbits, snakes, and different insects. Our staff teach children to be respectful and observe at a distance. We have a flock of chickens, which the Adolescent students help to care for and some guides choose

to have small animals in class, such as hamsters or fish. As per state requirements, small animals on campus are seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.

Class Trips, Going Outs & Overnight Trips

Off campus trips are limited to Elementary and Adolescent students only. Parents are notified in advance, with details of departure and return times, location, and activities planned. Class trips are occasions when the whole class participates and transportation is typically by bus. Going Outs are organized in class by small groups of students, with the assistance of their guide. These are typically short trips related to an educational topic that extend learning beyond the classroom.

Adolescent and Upper Elementary students go on two overnight trips each year (fall and spring) and may elect to participate in the Montessori Model United Nations program, which requires an additional trip to attend the MMUN Conference. Lower Elementary full cycle students (third graders) take a one-night camp trip in the spring of their final Lower Elementary year. Parents receive more information about off-campus trips at Parent Orientation.

Student Progress

Student progress is assessed through a combination of teacher observation and student demonstrations of skills and knowledge. Students demonstrate understanding in their use of materials, in presentations of reports or projects, and by interactions and activities with their guide and classmates. Guides at CMS track student progress through Transparent Classroom, and communicate with parents through email updates, phone calls, and/or in-person meetings. Conference reports are published in Transparent Classroom, according to the following schedule:

- ❖ Mid to late September - Adjustment Check-in (new students only) published
- ❖ Late October - Fall Conference Day (published conference report and meeting with guide)
- ❖ Early April - Spring Conference Day (published conference report and meeting with guide)

Specific dates are given on the CMS Calendar and details are discussed at Parent Orientation. Students in upper levels may compile work portfolios or binders with representative samples of their completed projects. These materials are kept at school and shared with parents periodically.

Safe Environments & Student Behavior Issues

CMS has an obligation and commitment to ensuring safe environments for all our students. Safe environments are welcoming, respectful, and supportive. They are free of threats, harassment, and bullying and allow students to explore and learn. The collaborative community experienced in the Montessori classroom helps children learn to assert their individual personality while still functioning harmoniously within the group. Children learn appropriate behavior through consistent limits, strong role models, clear expectations, and instruction methods that focus on what to do rather than what not to do. CMS staff are trained to provide guidance and support for students as they discover how to balance the needs of the self with the needs of others.

CMS staff address student behavioral issues in accordance with school policies, Montessori philosophy, and professional discretion, as it pertains to individual situations. When aggressive or inappropriate behavior occurs, adults present will address it immediately. Responses will vary depending on the child's age and the individual situation at hand but typically include verbal instructions, redirection, and mediation. This is part of normal social development and daily classroom activities. Parents are informed when behavioral issues are more significant, serious or ongoing, according to the following steps:

- 1. Initial communication:** An email, phone, or Zoom call from guide to parents, relaying the situation and what measures are being taken to address the issue at school.
- 2. Follow up:** If the situation is improving or resolved, the process stops here. If the situation is ongoing and not improving, the guide will request a meeting with parents.
- 3. Meeting:** The guide and parents meet to discuss the behavior issues and formulate an

Action Plan for addressing/resolving.

4. Follow up: Additional follow-ups resulting from the Action Plan.

If the behavioral issues continue to escalate or cannot be resolved through this process, CMS reserves the right to suspend or terminate enrollment for the student. Privacy and confidentiality during this process is insured. Information is only shared with CMS staff members whose involvement is required.

Parents who are concerned about the impact of another student's behavior on their child should communicate their concerns to CMS staff according to the following steps:

- 1. Initial communication:** An email, phone, or Zoom call with your child's guide expressing your concerns.
- 2.** Allow time for the guide to address the situation and for measures to take effect.
- 3. Meeting:** If the situation does not improve or resolve, email the guide and Executive Director about your concerns. A meeting will be scheduled to discuss next steps.

Please respect children who are learning by addressing concerns through school channels rather than contacting other parents directly, especially if the concerns happened at school. CMS employs Montessori principles and positive discipline strategies to address student behavior issues. Please note that the following are prohibited at CMS: corporal punishment and any threat of such, humiliation, ridicule or subjecting children to harsh or profane language, punishment associated with food, naps or toileting, and requiring a child to remain still or silent for an inappropriately long period of time.

Responsible Use of Technology & Electronic Devices Policy

The full policy is included in your 2023-2024 CMS Enrollment Form. Electronic devices are not permitted at school for students in Casita, Children's House, and Lower Elementary classrooms. Students at these levels engage in hands-on learning and do not use technology in class.

Upper Elementary and Adolescent students do have access to computers and digital technology in class, for educational purposes only. Students should know that behaviors that are not appropriate in person are not appropriate online either. Students are strongly encouraged to leave personal devices at home. If a student does bring a device to school, we expect the device to be off and stowed in their bag while they are at school.

Students are not permitted to bring personal electronic devices on off campus school trips, other than digital cameras. CMS is not responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen devices. Violations of CMS policies regarding the responsible use of technology at school will result in the loss of the student's privileges to use technology resources at CMS.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Communicable Illness

Please be considerate of others and keep your child home if they are unwell. This is greatly appreciated by your fellow CMS parents and staff! We emphasize the importance of handwashing and classrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily, but we need your help to prevent the spread of germs. If your child will be absent, please email us at attendance@community-montessori.org to report the absence. If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, please provide that information so we can notify others in the community.

CMS is obligated to follow Texas health regulations regarding notification and exclusion of children with a communicable illness, including COVID-19. In most cases this means being free of

fever and other symptoms for a 24-hour period. Our office will let you know if there are other readmission requirements for the specific illness your child has. Please note that head lice is a communicable disease. A child with head lice must be picked up immediately and treated at home. The child must be checked in our office by CMS staff prior to returning to class. Parents are asked to wait in the office until their child has been cleared.

If your child becomes ill at school, office staff will call and parents must pick up the child immediately. Symptoms, temperature, and other relevant information will be given over the phone and recorded on the Parent Communication Form that is sent home with the child. A child sent home with fever may not return to school until they have been fever free for at least 24 hours. CMS cannot refund tuition for any days missed due to communicable illness.

Medication

Whenever possible, medication should be given by parents at home. If your child must have medication at school, parents must bring it to the office and sign an authorization form which specifies time, dosage, and so forth. **Medication should never be sent to school with a child or placed in a child's lunchbox.** All medications are stored in the office. The only exceptions are EpiPens and inhalers, which are stored in the child's classroom out of reach of students.

- All medications must be in the original container labeled with the child's name. Prescription medication must include the date, dosage, and 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.
- Staff administering medication write the date, time, and dosage given on the Medication Authorization Form, at the time that the medication is given to the child. This form is kept on file in our office.

Allergy & Asthma Action Plans

Students who have been prescribed an EpiPen due to an anaphylactic reaction must have on file an Allergy Action Plan that is signed by the child's physician, listing specific instructions for the child in the event that a severe allergic reaction occurs at school. This information is shared with staff so they know what to do. Students who have been prescribed an inhaler must have on file an Asthma Action Plan signed by the child's physician that lists specific instructions for when and how to administer the inhaler.

Other allergies that are not severe or life-threatening, may be recorded on enrollment documents. It is helpful for staff to know this information so they can respond and care for your child at school. If your child has other medical issues that our staff should be aware of, please discuss them with the Director of Enrollment & Outreach during the enrollment process.

Injuries & Other Incidents

All CMS staff members have certification in CPR and first aid. If your child receives a minor injury at school, appropriate first aid will be administered. The injury and response are recorded on a Parent Communication Form. The form is signed at departure and a copy given to the family. The PCF is also used to record and communicate illnesses and incidents (such as biting). This form provides acknowledgement that CMS has informed parents of what happened at school. If questions arise about an injury or incident that happened during the school day, please contact your child's guide or call our office.

If an injury occurs which may require medical treatment or is more serious in nature, the office will call parents, relay what happened and determine what next steps may be necessary. In the event of a major medical emergency, staff will administer first aid and call 911. Parents will be notified immediately. **It is important that CMS have current contact information for ALL parents, as well as emergency contact persons, in case an emergency occurs during school hours.** Our staff will

follow instructions given by EMS, accompany the child to the hospital if needed and stay with the child until the parents arrive. Families should know that major medical injuries are required to be reported to state childcare licensing representatives who will investigate. CMS accident insurance may provide coverage for students who are injured at school. The Business Director can provide more information about that insurance.

Campus Security

The safety of our students is a high priority at CMS. We make every possible effort to keep our grounds and facilities secure and to ensure that our school procedures provide a safe environment for children. We require everyone on our campus to abide by our school safety procedures. CMS is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, county health department and child care licensing. Evacuation routes are posted in all buildings. Our staff receives annual training and conducts emergency drills throughout the school year. CMS employs a system of security cameras, gates, electronic locks, and fencing to limit access to our facilities. Questions regarding campus security should be directed to the Executive Director.

Tobacco, Drugs, Alcohol, & Weapons Policy

The CMS campus is a tobacco-free zone and no tobacco products are allowed anywhere on campus. CMS must be free of alcohol at all times that children are present. CMS reserves the right to request drug and/or alcohol screening from any employee that appears to be under the influence while at work and the Executive Director retains the right to send home any employee suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Weapons of any kind are prohibited on the CMS campus. Individuals licensed to carry a handgun or other weapon may not do so on CMS property. Visitors are prohibited from carrying weapons, except for law enforcement officers.

Emergency Preparedness

Students and staff at CMS take part in regular safety drills to ensure we are prepared for any situation that may arise. Every classroom on campus has an intercom phone that is used to communicate and announce drills during the school day.

Evacuation drills practice how to safely exit buildings in the event of an emergency, such as a fire. Evacuation routes are posted in every building on campus. Additional drills are conducted to practice safety measures in the event of severe weather, an intruder, or other incident on campus.

Staff are calm and matter-of-fact with children when emergency drills are practiced and speak generally in terms of safety rather than particular threats. We do not discuss with children what actual situations might occur that would require us to use these skills. CMS has annual site visits with the Georgetown Police Department as part of our Emergency Preparedness plan and campus safety procedures are reviewed annually.

Required Notifications

- Parents should 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. (We are required to report this to you by the state of Texas.)
- CMS is licensed by the state of Texas as a child care center. Our license is posted in the CMS office. Parents may ask at any time to view a copy of the Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and/or the most recent inspection report for our school. These items are available in the school office. Licensing information can be found at the Texas Health and Human Services [website](#) or by calling 512-834-3426.
- The current list of CMS staff members is posted in the office and is also available on our website.

- If a CMS employee has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to Child Protective Services. The individual making the report may do so anonymously or may elect to inform the Executive Director. If CPS comes to our campus to investigate a report, CMS staff will cooperate fully with their process. Parents do not have to be notified prior to a CPS officer or other law enforcement officer speaking with a child. The Texas Abuse and Neglect hotline number is 1-800-252-5400.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition & Fees Statement

Annual tuition and fees are detailed on the CMS Tuition & Fee Schedule, which is published on our website and also included in Enrollment forms. Our Director of Enrollment & Outreach can answer questions regarding tuition rates for various school programs. Tuition is budgeted and planned on a school-year basis and can be paid in a single payment or according to an installment plan. CMS utilizes the FACTS Tuition Management System for automated tuition payments. Questions related to billing should be directed to our Business Director. In some situations, families may be eligible for tuition discounts. These are detailed under the Tuition Policies included in the Tuition & Fees Statement.

Withdrawal Policy

CMS assumes that when you enroll, your child will attend for the entire school year. If you terminate enrollment prior to July 1, 2023, the Annual Enrollment Fee is forfeited but no tuition is owed. If you terminate enrollment after July 1, 2023, the Annual Enrollment Fee is forfeited and you will be responsible for paying a prorated amount of tuition for any days attended, plus an additional fee equal to 10 percent of your child's total annual tuition. CMS reserves the right to terminate the enrollment agreement at any time with or without cause.

Force Majeure Closures

Should events beyond the control of CMS occur, including but not limited to fire, hurricane, extreme inclement weather, pandemic, terrorism, war, governmental action, or disruption of necessary utilities (water, electricity etc.), the school has the discretion to close and/or modify its operations as required to ensure safe operations. Financial obligations for tuition and fees remain in full effect and tuition reduction or refunds will not be offered.

Tuition Assistance

CMS offers tuition assistance to families who have a strong commitment to Montessori education but are struggling to meet the financial obligations of tuition and fees. Awards are made for one school year at a time and are based on demonstrated financial need. Applications are accepted through FACTS Tuition Management System. A non-refundable payment of \$40 is due to FACTS (CMS does not receive the fee) for this service.

Giving

CMS is a non-profit 501c3 organization and donations are tax exempt. We strive to keep tuition affordable so we can offer Montessori education to as many families as possible. Our tuition rates cover operating expenses only. For improvements to our facilities and programs, we fundraise. In addition to fundraising events for specific needs like playground equipment, the Annual Fund is a giving program that provides funds each year for upgrading classroom materials, offering professional development for our staff, and improving our facilities. All donations make an immediate difference to our students and improve the quality of education provided at CMS.