



Children's Own School

Parent Handbook

2024-2025

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Welcome to all new and returning families!

We hope you will find our Parent Handbook both useful and accessible. It is a comprehensive overview of your child's school day and our procedures and policies.

Children's Own School has been a Montessori tradition since 1942. We are proud to have associate accreditation status from the *Association Montessori Internationale*. We are members of the *Montessori Schools of Massachusetts* and the *Association of Independent Schools of New England*. We are licensed by and operate under the guidance of the *Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care*.

Dr. Montessori's time-tested curriculum

- addresses social, cognitive, and emotional development;
- promotes creative thinking and decision making skills;
- offers children freedom of choice and movement;
- promotes cooperative learning in a multi-age classroom where younger children learn from their older classmates—who become leaders in the classroom;
- fosters independence and a lifelong love of learning.

Thank you for choosing Children's Own School! We look forward to partnering with families to build an inclusive community based on trust and mutual respect.

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Our School

Mission

The mission of Children's Own School is to employ the philosophy and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori to:

- educate children to be successful and valued members of the community;
- enable children to develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning;
- instill a deep sense of care of self, care of others, and care of the school environment.

Diversity Statement

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

Governance

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

Classroom Teams

Our teachers foster children's natural curiosity by preparing indoor and outdoor environments to encourage optimal development. Classroom teams are, ideally, composed of two adults: a Montessori guide (also called master teacher) and a classroom assistant. In addition, float teachers spend time in each classroom and substitute when needed. All staff members are certified in infant, child, and adult First Aid and CPR.

Our guides/master teachers are certified Montessori professionals, with a graduate-level, specialized degree. They respect children as individuals and strive to prepare an environment that enables each child to connect to productive work. The Guides assist children as they develop concentration, self-control, and progress towards independent decision making.

Teaching teams work cooperatively to prepare and maintain an orderly, attractive, and joyful learning environment. Assistants provide another pair of observant eyes and ears supporting our young learners, modeling courteous and respectful behavior, and contributing to the warm, supportive, calm atmosphere that is the hallmark of Montessori classrooms and our school.

Administrative Team

The Director works with the Board, teachers, and families to provide a program that embodies the school's philosophy and mission, promotes the strength of a positive community, and strives to improve the financial and physical conditions of the school. The Director manages daily administration and supervises the faculty including coordinating the implementation of the Montessori program across the classrooms. The Director assures compliance with state licensing mandates and provides care and support for classrooms, staff, and children when needed. The Director provides support and guidance in conjunction with the classroom teams to help meet specific needs of individual children, and meets with families as needed.

The Literacy and Communications Director works to ensure a rich language experience for all children and helps create environments where the Montessori language curriculum can be implemented with fidelity to AMI standards. The Literacy and Communications Director works directly with the Kindergarteners on language and literacy skills using the Orton Gillingham method—based on the science of reading. The Literacy and Communications Director can provide an additional professional opinion regarding the general needs of a classroom or specific needs of individual children and meets with families as needed.

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

Parent Committee

The Parent Committee organizes and hosts special events throughout the year to connect the families in our community. The committee of volunteers keeps parents informed of upcoming events, coordinates sale of COS swag, coordinates classroom contributions for teacher appreciation (contributions may be monetary, volunteer hours, or hospitality for events). All contributions by families are voluntary and gratefully appreciated. The Parent Committee and its volunteers are instrumental in organizing an auction each spring which helps support scholarship, professional development, enhancements to programming, and classroom materials.

Communication

Our Office Manager manages our email lists and may send essential and/or time sensitive messages via email. Parent contact information is provided in the Class Lists and Family Directory via *Transparent Classroom*. This personal contact information is solely for the use of COS families—and is not to be distributed or used by other individuals or organizations. Before sending any emails to the COS community/individual classrooms/etc., please send a draft to the Director for review/approval. The use of broadcast emails, blogs, or public websites to contact fellow parents about sensitive issues involving COS policy, teachers, staff, or students is inappropriate.

Code of Conduct

Children's Own School is a community that strives to provide opportunities for each child, teacher, parent, and staff member to be a successful and valued member. Our expectations for the children are to take care of themselves, take care of others, and take care of our school environment. When all adult members of our school follow these principles of respect, we provide countless examples for our children to emulate. With consistency, we are guiding children to become productive and successful members of the greater world community. Our expectation is for all adults to support the Montessori lessons of grace and courtesy:

- Treat all people with courtesy and respect;
- Address conflicts directly in a calm and private manner;
- Respect the privacy and dignity of adults and children;
- Refrain from gossip.

COS Board members are not charged with oversight of day-to-day school management. Please address these concerns with the Director.

Parent Conduct

Our community thrives on the principles of grace, courtesy, and respect. Your signature acknowledging receipt and reading of this handbook indicates your willingness to abide by the following guidelines. Parents who stray from the above guidelines will be asked to meet with the administrative team. We recognize that everyone has bad days and everyone makes mistakes; however, we seek to curtail patterns of behavior.

Privacy

Please help us maintain the mutual trust and respect we all need to keep our community healthy by safeguarding the privacy of children, families, and staff. Passing on confidential, damaging, or hurtful information is not acceptable.

Conflicts

Conflicts between parents or between parents and staff should be addressed in a calm and private manner, preferably in person or with a respectful note. Phone calls and emails should not be used to express anger, frustration, or criticism. Meetings are to be held by appointment or at a mutually convenient time.

When a parent has a question, concern or grievance, they should make every effort to bring their issue to the appropriate person as outlined below:

- For program, student, and classroom issues:
 - First: child's teacher
 - Second: Director

- For General School Operations and Policy Issues:
 - Office Manager or Administration Team member

Etiquette

COS teachers, staff, and parents are all expected to strive for high standards of etiquette and behavior. Commitments should be honored and criticism should be constructive and genial. Parking and traffic laws must be followed, and our neighbors should be treated with the utmost respect. This is good for our community and for our children..

Our Programs

Toddler: 22-28 months

Half Day: 8:30 - 11:30 am

Full Day: 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

“Help me to help myself” is the mantra of the growing toddler.

Montessori toddler classrooms are simpler and slower paced than the Montessori primary rooms for three to six year olds. Tables and chairs are smaller, and the teacher-child ratio is lower (2:9 vs 2:20). It is a positive, supportive, non-competitive, and joyful classroom—with a lot of singing, outdoor time, and physical movement.

Our program supports each child’s development of self-care skills—such as dressing and toileting—and promotes independence, language development, concentration, problem solving, visual discrimination, social emotional skills, and physical coordination. The Montessori materials are specifically structured to meet the developmental needs of toddlers and to support their need for purposeful activity.

Primary: 2.9-6 years

Half Day: 8:30 - 11:30 am

Full Day: 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Extended Day (Limited enrollment): 8:30 - 5:00 pm

Our primary program is the “original” Montessori program and designed specifically for children around 3 years through kindergarten. Children are given sequenced lessons designed to increase their skills and independence. The Primary program is typically a three-year program that includes a final, Kindergarten year.

Because they stay in the same Primary classroom for their entire experience at COS, children develop close relationships. During the three-hour morning work cycle, children move freely between all areas of the classroom: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, and Language. Geography and science are presented in a sensorial manner and woven throughout the curriculum areas. Art, music, and storytelling round out the daily experience. Once children have been introduced to specific activities, they are free to independently choose to use the materials that appeal to them.

Children enrolled in the full day program have lunch at school, recess, a rest time or nap if needed, and/or an afternoon Montessori work period, leaving school at 3:00 pm.

- **Limited Extended Day option from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm**

This program enrolls a maximum of 10 children. Families must elect this option when they enroll in our Primary program; it is a full year commitment—not available to any child under three years of age by the start of the school year. There is no guarantee that your child will have a space and may be accepted for Full Day (3:00 dismissal). The option to transfer into this program during the year or from year-to-year is not guaranteed. If a family's needs change, the option to drop this option is permitted during the next year's re-enrollment period.

During the school day, all children enjoy the same Primary program. From 3:00 – 5:00 pm, children in this program gather in the Blue Room. They enjoy a hearty afternoon snack, organized activities, free play, art, and circle time. When the weather permits, they spend ample time in free outdoor play.

Children must be 3 years old to enroll in this option, fully potty-trained, and capable of regular, independent use of the toilet. Children enrolled in the after school program must be able to follow adult directions and participate in the group activities.

Kindergarten at Children's Own School

Unlike a traditional Kindergarten program, the final year of the Primary classroom cycle is really a “capstone” experience. Our Montessori curriculum is spiral—building on itself. We do not offer a specific, separate Kindergarten curriculum; rather, the Kindergarten year allows for a full and complete exploration of the Montessori Primary curriculum. This is their time to fully blossom as they become confident in themselves and push the boundaries of their learning experience.

The Kindergarteners develop confidence as leaders and role models for the younger students. They apply the skills and knowledge gleaned in prior years to extend their work into more advanced mathematics and language activities. All the threads of the Montessori Primary program come together in their final year. They leave prepared to enter first grade. Early elementary academic skills, particularly reading, emerge at different times for children. That said, COS believes strongly that children should enter first grade with strong literacy skills. As such, our reading specialist works with the Kindergarteners to ensure a successful foundation in the skills needed for decoding text. Our students typically enter first grade as practiced early readers, with mathematical competencies, and strong social/emotional skills.

Kindergarteners participate in Kindergarten-specific afternoon activities in addition to their afternoon work cycle in the classroom. They work with our music and reading specialist weekly. Each year they write a play, compose the music, and perform for the school community on the last day of school.

Special Programs

Throughout the school year, children may leave their classroom group to participate in special pull-out programs or events—such as special art or cooking projects, working outside gardening, or participating in a planned activity. We also enjoy going on nature walks in the nearby Town Forest. Anytime a special program involves leaving the school grounds, such as a nature walk to the Town Forest, families will be informed in advance. When children participate in any special programs, they will always be with qualified COS staff.

Communication

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

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

While frequent communication is important, there are times that are not appropriate to pass along information about your child to staff. Drop off and pick up are not ideal times for long conversations. These transition times require everyone to be fully focused on supervising children.

Contacting Your Child's Teacher

Please do not hesitate to call the office or email your child's classroom team with information concerning your child or to request a call back. Please understand that teachers are generally not available to answer or return calls and/or emails during classroom hours, and trust that they will be in contact as soon as possible. For more urgent messages, please contact the office. Please inform your child's teacher if there is a change in the home situation: death, divorce, relocation, a new baby, friends or relatives visiting, parent(s) traveling, a new caregiver, a change in pick up/drop off routine, or sleep disruptions due to fears or nightmares. Changes in a child's routine are often reflected in their school behavior. The more information we have, the better we can support your child.

Contacting the Office

Most calls during school hours are answered in person. If you get the voicemail system during school hours, please wait a few minutes and try again or leave a message.

Contacting the Board

The Board is available to speak about school governance, finances, and school leadership. The Board is not involved in the day-to-day operation of the school. The Board can address questions about the mission and vision of the school and long-range strategic planning. They welcome your interest in serving on the Board of Directors and can inform you about the nomination process and the extent of the commitment of service. The Board can be contacted by email: board@childrensown.org.

Contacting the Parent Committee

The Parent Committee co-chairs are available to speak to parents about many different volunteer opportunities including—volunteering to help with fundraising, events, and whole school initiatives. They can address questions about the community in general, fundraising efforts, and supporting staff.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Formal conferences are held twice a year—Fall and Spring— in person. It is important that both parents attend these conferences. COS closes a half day and a full day for children parent/teacher conference days. A written progress report is sent via Transparent Classroom to families in January and June to highlight your child's progress. Additional meetings may be set up with your child's teacher as needed.

Communication from School

We use email and newsletters as our primary means to communicate information that all families need to be aware of—such as upcoming school events. Each classroom team sends home a newsletter on Fridays, and a Director's Newsletter is sent out monthly.

Transparent Classroom is the system we use for electronic enrollment documents and classroom record keeping. Families are expected to create an account with Transparent Classroom. *School Cues* is used for text alerts such as when school is closed unexpectedly.

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

Injury Reports

COS does not have a school nurse. When children are injured at school, teachers and other school staff are trained to care for minor illnesses and injuries. Any time your child is injured in a way that would require a visit to the school nurse in a public school setting, COS will send home an injury report. We will always call a parent/guardian for any injury that requires care beyond minor first aid.

Daily Schedule and Logistics

A typical day at Children's Own School:

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Arrival (outdoor) | 8:30 am – 8:40 am |
| Morning Work Cycle (lessons and play) | 8:30 am – 11:30 am |
| Half-day dismissal (front playground) | 11:30 am - 12:00 pm |
| Lunch/Recess | 11:30 am – 1:00 pm |
| Rest/nap (for those who do/all Toddlers) | 12:30 (Toddlers) 1:15 pm (Primary) |
| Afternoon Work Cycle (lessons and play) | 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm |
| Afternoon dismissal (playground) | 2:35 pm – 3:00 pm |
| Extended Day Program | 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm |

Attendance: Why it Matters

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

- A consistent routine provides security for the young child—building both comfort and confidence.
- Because your child's experience with classroom materials is cumulative, consistent attendance bolsters learning.
- Your own commitment to your child's presence in school affirms the importance of school and learning.
- Intermittent attendance can negatively affect both your child's adjustment to school and their learning.

Please schedule appointments with doctors, dentists, and other professionals outside classroom hours whenever possible. If your child has an appointment that will detain them, please inform the office via phone or email the office and your classroom team ahead of time. If you are unable to arrive before 9:30 am, half-day enrolled children will miss that day of school. Full Day and Extended Day children may arrive at 11:30 am for lunch/recess and the afternoon work cycle. This policy includes late arrivals from appointments. If you are dismissing your child for a morning appointment, and your child will not be returning before lunch (11:30), your child should remain home for the remainder of the day.

Getting to School on Time

School begins at 8:30 a.m., and a prompt arrival allows for the expected three-hour work period of a Montessori classroom. Out of respect for your own child, other children, and teachers, please help your child arrive at school on time. When younger children arrive late, it disturbs their sense of

order—what is expected and how things are supposed to be. Late arrivals can often lead to difficult transitions to the classroom and disrupt the work of other children as well as the teacher. Children are considered tardy if they arrive after 8:40 am. Persistent tardiness or absenteeism may affect the decision to offer a child re-enrollment for the following school year. COS faculty welcome children outside during our drop off window from 8:30 – 8:40 a.m., and transition them to their classrooms. Parents and children say their “good-byes in the driveway”. If you arrive after the drop-off period, please ring the doorbell to the side entrance by the double glass doors. A staff member will arrive as soon as possible to welcome your child.

If you are unable to arrive before 9:30 am, half-day enrolled children will miss that day of school. Full Day and Extended Day children may arrive at 11:30 am for lunch/recess and the afternoon work cycle. This policy includes late arrivals from appointments. If you are dismissing your child for a morning appointment, and your child will not be returning before lunch (11:30), your child should remain home for the remainder of the day.

Drop-off Expectations

Parents or caregivers are typically not invited into the school at drop-off. In our experience, most children recover from separation anxiety or a difficult drop-off quickly once in the classroom. A parent’s presence can prolong the big feelings—a quick drop off is generally the best way to go. We all are well-versed in helping children transition despite any big feelings at drop off. Please know that we will support your child to help them feel calm and secure. Please feel free to call the office if you would like to check on your child after a drop off that may have been difficult.

If your child does not settle in the classroom (for example, persistent crying for an hour) on any particular day, we will ask that someone come and pick up the child. If your child’s transition to school is not improving with time, we will have a conversation on how to best support a successful transition routine to provide consistency and comfort.

Please allow/encourage your child to walk to the school entrance. This bit of independence is a confidence booster and an opportunity for your child to enter the school with friends. Being a Montessori parent means doing less for your child as they become capable, supporting their natural drive(s) to independence (there are many at various stages of development)—showing and helping rather than doing things.

Please hold your child’s hand when you are walking to the school entrance—this is a safety issue. Montessori parents respect independence and set appropriate boundaries. Please supervise your child while waiting to enter the school. This is a safety concern and reinforces the way children move around outside as a group when supervised by COS teachers:

- The ramp is not a climbing structure.
- Please don’t walk in the garden beds.
- Snow and ice in winter can be slippery/dangerous.

Mobile phone use during drop-off and pick-up is strongly discouraged. Phones are a distraction when children need our attention and supervision. Whether you are driving or walking/biking, give your child your full attention during arrival and dismissal. Allowing your child to watch or do anything on a mobile phone to and from school will make drop off more challenging, and you will miss an opportunity to share the joy of your child's day.

Please be mindful of our neighbors.

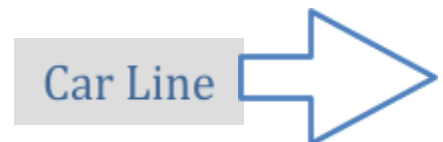
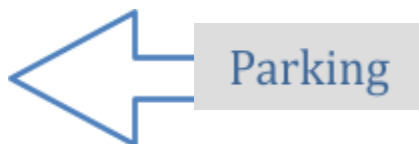
- Park courteously; do not make it difficult for neighbors to arrive at or leave their homes.
- Follow traffic laws.
- Drive like your children live here.
- Do not block the shared driveway.

Car Line Guidance

We prefer that you use the car line as indicated below:



COS building



The car line begins on Main Street behind the two marked parking spaces before the COS driveway entrance. The entrance to the driveway will be blocked until 8:30 and then opened for cars to pull up to the front entrance where a staff member will unbuckle and take your child out of the car and walk

your child to the entrance. Parents who use the car line/drive way drop off should not get out of their cars so that we can keep the line moving as efficiently as possible.

- Families waiting to pull into the driveway should form a line along Main Street until they are directed to pull into the COS driveway.
- As children are dropped off, please pull out of the driveway to allow more cars to move into the driveway.
- Members of the administrative team will be on hand to assist in traffic flow as needed.

Expectations for Car Line

- Please pull up to the front stairs.. This allows a maximum number of cars to be in the driveway at the same time.
- Please do not get out of your car to unload your child(ren)—a staff member will take care of them and walk them to the school entrance.
- **When you exit the COS driveway, you must turn right.**
- Any family anticipating a difficult drop off should park and walk their child up to school instead of using the car line.
- No Idling in the driveway.

Please remember to turn off your car engine when dropping off or picking up your child—better for little lungs and our environment.

Parking Options for Drop Off

If you wish to park your car and walk your child up the driveway for drop off, there are marked spots along Main Street. There are multiple crosswalks, including one right in front of COS, to safely cross.

Picking Up Your Child

We dismiss from our playgrounds unless extreme weather prohibits outside dismissal. Come to the playground gate to pick up your child. Your classroom teacher will let you know which playground will be used for dismissal. Once the teacher has released your child, your child is once again under your supervision. Children are never allowed inside the building without adult supervision after they have been released to an authorized adult.

We expect all caregivers to be on time for pick-up—by 3:00 p.m. In the event of an unavoidable delay, please call the school. Please be sensitive to your child's pick-up time. Children who have not been picked up on time (12:00pm, 3:00 pm, or 5:00pm, depending on how they are enrolled) will be waiting in the office. After three late Extended Day pick-ups past 5:00 pm, the child will be required to be picked up at 4:30 pm so as not to inconvenience COS staff at the end of their scheduled day.

Even if you have called the school to say you are going to be a few minutes late, your child will be waiting in the office. If you have a scheduling conflict, such as needing to pick up another child at

another school, we ask that you arrange to pick up your COS child before going elsewhere. Children are generally outside playing by 2:35 and ready to be dismissed.

Special Circumstances Pick-Up

Pick-up by someone other than the parent/guardian or regular caregiver needs to be authorized daily unless they are on the list of approved adults to whom we may release your child (as indicated on your paperwork in Transparent Classroom). Please call or email if a friend, neighbor, new caregiver, or family member will be picking up your child. It is always best if your child's teachers are introduced ahead of time to someone, other than yourself, who will be picking up your child. Before releasing your child to anyone new/not familiar, teachers will check identification as a safety precaution.

Snow Days/Inclement Weather

Children's Own School will close for snowstorms and other severe weather whenever the Winchester Public Schools close. There are various listings on the Internet, radio, and TV. You can also call the Winchester Public School Link Line at 781-721-7004 or go to their website. We will send an email to families as well.

The school may also close even though public schools are open, if the Director determines it is in the best interest of the children or the school to do so. Notification will be sent as early as possible.

If Winchester has a one-hour delay due to inclement weather, COS will also have a one hour delay. However, if there is a two-hour delay in Winchester, our morning programs will be canceled. Full day students will begin at noon. Children should eat lunch at home and before arriving at noon.

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

We do not make up canceled school days at the end of the year.

Everyday Life

Food is not just the essential fuel for our bodies, it also serves a social function. We promote this aspect by offering snack and lunchtime in a way that provides for this social element and common grace and courtesy lessons.

If your child has any food allergies or food sensitivities, please make this clear when filling out your paperwork. If special measures must be taken to protect your child, such as providing an *EpiPen*, please speak directly to your child's teachers and review the requirements in the Health and Safety Section. You will need to fill out an Individual Health Care Plan signed by your child's pediatrician and provide an Epi-Pen to be left at school along with any other medications outlined for treatment. This must be completed before your child's first day. Please reach out to the Director for a form.

Snack

Each classroom offers a morning self-serve snack. We strive to have a variety of food preparation activities available so that children may eat when hungry.

Classroom Food Preparation

As part of the Practical Life curriculum, classrooms have many food preparation activities on hand, and this is always available for children who are hungry after snack or lunch.

Water Bottles

Filtered water is available for children to drink throughout the day in each classroom in self-serve pitchers. Water bottles will be kept in a child's cubby and brought outside when the weather is hot. Some children use their water bottle at lunch and some choose to pour their own from the classroom pitcher.

Lunch

Children staying for afternoons bring their lunches. Foods that children can manage without help are the most popular: small sandwiches, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, berries, cut fruit, cheese and crackers, peeled hard boiled eggs, etc. Small individual containers that children can open and close independently are a better option than pre-packed food marketed as an individual serving. Bento boxes are a favorite for most families as they allow many choices for your child and can be opened easily by children.

Teachers encourage children to eat their lunches, but lunch is also a very social time in a preschool classroom!. Any food not consumed will be sent home each day. Lunch boxes cannot be refrigerated at school, and we do not reheat food for lunches. Please use an insulated bag and cold pack if needed.

Nut Free Environment

We are a NUT-FREE school. Because people who are severely allergic can have an anaphylactic reaction to trace amounts of peanuts or tree nuts, we must request the cooperation of all COS families and staff. We ask everyone to make a conscious effort to keep peanut butter and any foods consisting of or containing peanuts or tree nuts away from our school and school grounds. Please do not use peanuts, peanut products, nuts, or nut products when preparing food that your child will bring to school, and be sure to check labels as many children have reactions to foods that contain nuts—even if they are not in their own lunches.

- Please read ingredient labels on packaged foods.
- Any food sent to school to be shared with the class must have been made in a nut-free facility.
- Children are not allowed to share food during lunch.
- With the cooperation of all families and staff members, we will be able to minimize the risk of any allergic reactions.

Clothing

General Guidelines

Clothing free of commercial characters is preferred. If a child comes to school wearing clothes that are distracting to the child or the classroom, we may ask them to change or remove the item. Please do not send your child to school in costumes intended for pretend play.

If dressing is a battle at home, it can be helpful to offer your child a choice of two options of clothing to avoid struggles over what to wear to school. Children take pride in being able to dress themselves. When choosing clothes for your child, look for pants that are easy to pull on, front openings and simple fastenings, such as large, loose buttons and easy zippers. Children frequently change clothing at COS. Please let them practice dressing themselves at home as this is the expectation at school. Clothing that is easy to manipulate also helps children prevent bathroom “accidents.”

Please send at least one complete set of seasonally-appropriate extra clothing, several pairs of underpants and socks (labeled with your child’s name) to keep in their cubby in case a change of clothing is needed. Be sure to update your child’s extra clothing as needed and with the change of seasons.

Outerwear

The children will go outdoors to play every day, except during truly inclement weather. Please dress your child for the weather. In rainy weather, this means raincoats/rain suits with a hood and rain boots. In winter, snow pants and boots are nice for warmth, even if it’s not snowy. Don’t forget hats and mittens or gloves! All-in-one snowsuits are easier for children to put on by themselves. Consider this

option instead of snow pants and a jacket. Your child should wear their outside gear to school when needed.

Shoes

Please choose closed-toe outdoor shoes that are easy for your child to put on, safe, and comfortable for your child to run, climb, and play outside. No sandals, clogs, or flip flops, please—these are not ideal for the level of outdoor activity that children engage in during recess. If your child has not mastered lacing, please consider buying slip on shoes or shoes with Velcro fasteners.

Classroom Indoor Shoes



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

Jewelry, Toys, and other Distractions

Children may not bring personal belongings such as toys, costume jewelry, costume headbands, money, etc. to school. This creates a distraction from the school day, and there is the possibility that the item may become lost or broken.

Labeling

Please label all clothing with name tags or a permanent marker. As you can imagine, we have multiples of many outdoor gear items, and children leave things behind or put items in the wrong cubby. Labels help us find and return items to their rightful owner. We will use a permanent marker to discreetly put your child's name on their clothing if needed for any reason.

Cubbies

Each child has a cubby. This is a place where the child's personal belongings can be kept safely at school. There is ample room for coats and sweaters, a change of clothes, and a lunch box. Our cubbies are not really large enough for backpacks plus outdoor gear—children don't really need a backpack most days.

Teachers check your child's cubby daily for lunch boxes, wet clothes, and other things that need to go home. Occasionally a teacher may leave a note in your child's lunchbox with a request for additional clothing. Please send a PUL wet bag to school so we may send wet or soiled clothing home and minimize the use of plastic bags.

Lost And Found

Labeling your child's possessions will minimize the risk of any of them ending up in the Lost and Found, which is in the foyer by the side double glass doors. If your child is missing any belongings, check the Lost and Found bin.

Special Programs

COS operates as a preschool, and not a child care center. Children will occasionally be invited to participate in special programs during the school day without prior parental notification. Children never leave the campus for a special program without prior notification/permission from the family.

Toileting

Some children who have already mastered using the toilet have trouble adjusting at school and may experience some regression. This is not out of the ordinary, but feel free to speak to your child's teacher or the director if you have concerns. This is one reason we ask families to provide an extra change of clothes to have available in your child's cubby. Feel free to contact the administrative team if you have any questions about our toileting process, toilet learning, or other areas of development.

Unless there is a medical or developmental condition that contraindicates a child using the toilet, we expect that all children enrolled in the Primary Program are working on mastering toilet learning and out of a diaper.

Independence is promoted by our Montessori philosophy, lessons, and activities. We specifically teach children to care for themselves, others, and the classroom environment. Learning to use the toilet is an important step toward independence. COS staff are always available to help a child who needs assistance in the toileting process or to clean up and change when a child has had a toileting accident.

Children who enroll in our Primary Program and are not yet independent in their toileting are asked to wear underwear—no diapers—so that they may practice independence at school. Children are frequently asked to use the toilet by classroom staff. We have found that, for most children, if they

arrive at school not yet potty trained, they quickly learn (within a matter of weeks). This is an important self-care activity. It is important that families continue with the practice at home. For children in the process of toilet learning, regular communication between school and home will take place to help the child successfully master the process.

Children who enroll in our Toddler Program will be actively working on toilet learning as developmentally appropriate. Again, regular communication between school and home is important in this process. Yellow room families are responsible for providing a supply of diapers for your child.

Separation Anxiety

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

As noted earlier in the handbook, when separation anxiety is not a temporary condition, COS will work with the family to develop a plan specific to help that child feel safe and happy at school. Strategies that have been used in the past include: a consistent/quick drop off, bringing a totem/touchstone to COS, creating a longer transition/phase-in period, or shortening the length of a child's day at COS.

Traditions

Flower Arranging

As part of the Montessori curriculum, children are given lessons in flower arranging. They fill vases with flowers and greenery which beautify the classroom and school environment. Each classroom sends home a weekly shopping list with a family for classroom supplies which include flowers. Most flowers are welcome; please avoid flowers with thorns or strong aromas. As a general guideline, parents typically bring one dozen of two different but complimentary flowers and assorted greenery.

Kindergarten Play

During the second half of the year, the Kindergarteners work with our music teacher to brainstorm ideas for a play. They work cooperatively on writing the play, choosing roles, composing the music, learning their lines and the music, and designing the set/props. They perform the play on the last day of school for the whole community—it is truly one of the highlights of the school year.

Birthdays

Each classroom has a slightly different procedure for celebrating birthdays. Your child's teacher will let you know how and when your child's birthday will be celebrated. Families are often asked to send in a photo from each year of their child's life or the child's favorite book to share with the group.

School Support Events

New Student Visits

New student visits take place during the first week of school before they officially begin the year. They will meet their teachers and familiarize themselves with their new classroom.

Back to School Night

Families visit their child's classroom to learn about the focus of our Montessori program for each age. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to see, firsthand, what their child will be learning, ask questions, see the classroom set up, and meet other families.

Board of Directors Meetings

Monthly Board meetings are open to all members of our community. The elected members of the Board vote on important leadership and financial decisions throughout the year. A staff representative, a parent committee representative, the Director and Administrative team attend Board meetings as non-voting members. Executive sessions of the board are closed to non-voting members of the board and the COS community except by invitation. Board meetings are held virtually or in-person. They are marked on the school's Google calendar, and a reminder is sent to the community.

Open House

Each fall we hold an open house for prospective parents who may be interested in applying for the following school year. We encourage you to reach out to your friends and invite them to attend.

Annual Auction

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year, and brings the whole school community together. We encourage families to contribute, attend, and invite friends! Many volunteers are needed to help make this evening a success—all proceeds go directly to programs, classroom materials, and events for the children.

Enrollment

Classroom Assignments

Our Primary classrooms are made up of children 2.9 to 6 years of age. The children stay in the same primary classroom for the entire time they are in school. This enables them to build close relationships with teachers as well as their peers. We do not honor specific teacher or classroom requests—we strive to balance our classrooms on many levels and cannot promise any specific assignment. Siblings are generally not placed in the same classroom.

Re-Enrollment

Re-enrollment contracts are distributed via Transparent Classroom to all current families toward the end of January. To re-enroll your child for the following school year, please submit your contract and deposit before the deadline indicated on the contract. The deposit for all programs is 10% of the full year's tuition and is applied to your total tuition payment. Deposits are non-refundable. Tuition payments must be current as of January 15th to receive a re-enrollment contract.

Sibling Admissions

We give preference in admission to siblings of current students and alumni when those older siblings have enrolled for the full developmental cycle of our Primary Program (meaning they attend the Kindergarten year at COS). Sibling applications (with registration fee) are due by December 31st.

Withdrawal

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

If parents decide to withdraw a student for any reason, they must notify the Director in writing of their decision. Regardless of reason for withdrawal, no portion of tuition fees paid or outstanding will be refunded or canceled even in the event of absence, withdrawal, or dismissal.

Scholarships

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

Applications will not be considered if they are late, incomplete, or do not include copies of tax returns. Any family with an unpaid balance after February 28th is ineligible for a scholarship until all outstanding payments are made. Given our desire to help as many deserving families as possible, we require that families receiving scholarships pay a minimum of the enrollment deposit per child per school year.

Admission and scholarship decisions are made separately. The criteria for awarding scholarships include the financial need of the individual family, the availability of funds, and the total need of all families who have applied in any given year. A child may be accepted for admission, but not awarded a scholarship. Financial information provided to the school, scholarship awards, and the names of those receiving scholarships are confidential.

Scholarships are only awarded for our school day. If a family chooses the Extended Day Program, the responsibility for the difference in tuition is theirs.

Tuition

There are two options for tuition payment plans: paying in two installments or paying monthly. You choose the plan when you sign your contract. After your deposit is subtracted from the total tuition, the balance is invoiced in either two installments (half due August 1st and half due March 1st) or nine installments (one-ninth due each month, August through April).

Prompt payment is essential to the financial well-being of the school. Blackbaud manages our tuition payments directly with families.

Non-refundability

Your obligation to pay the tuition for the full academic year is unconditional after acceptance of the contract by the School or July 1st, whichever shall be the last to occur. If the signees of the Reservation Agreement and Enrollment Contract wish to cancel, the Director must receive a written (email or delivered mail) correspondence prior to July 1st. Such cancellation will result in the forfeiture of the entire Advance Tuition Deposit.

Enrollment Forms

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

Please submit your child's Enrollment Form, Health Form, and Family and Child History Form before the start of the first day of school. All of this information should be submitted electronically via your Transparent Classroom account. In addition, you will need to submit a copy of your child's most recent health record including all immunizations via email: information@childrensown.org, by dropping it off at the school before the first day, or mailing a copy. (see below)

Health Record

Your child's health record must show all required immunizations, a lead test screening, and a *recent* physical exam. The health record must show the date of a recent physical exam and is valid for one calendar year from that date. Please be sure to give us an updated health record if it expires before the end of the school year.

Required Immunizations:

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

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

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

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

Fundraising/Development

Children's Own School is a non-profit preschool, so fundraising is essential. We are committed to attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers and staff, maintaining our beloved building, and providing programming a resources of the highest quality for our students. If your company matches charitable contributions or if you know of a potential source of grants or funding, we would very much appreciate having you share information with the Director or Office Manager.

Volunteer And Donation Opportunities

Parents who would like to volunteer to help the school throughout the year are encouraged to talk to a member of the Parent Committee or Director, and/or send an email to the office.

The Parent Committee solicits donations for both a holiday and end-of-year teacher appreciation gifts. While the Parent Committee suggests an amount to contribute and strives for 100% participation, contributions are always at a family's discretion.

COS Tax I.D. Number

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

Health and Safety

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

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

Monitor for symptoms and stay home when sick.

- We can avoid chronically ill children and staff when sick children are kept home—even when feeling under the weather with normal childhood illness accompanied by severe cold-like symptoms—as it helps prevent the spread of illness among both children and staff.
- All families need a plan for back-up childcare in the event of illness. We are not able to provide the personalized care and support a little person who feels “under-the-weather” deserves. If your child is not able to fully participate as expected during the school day, your child should remain at home—rest is best.
- A common cold may keep a child out for a day or two. Influenza and other illnesses will require a longer period of absence before the child is feeling well enough to return to school.
- Children must be able to handle the self-care of a lingering cold to return to school (i.e., keeping a mask on, able to blow their nose, not coughing uncontrollably) and have adequate stamina to make it through a school day.

Picking up a Sick Child

A child experiencing **ANY** of the following will be sent home:

- Fever 100.4+;
- Vomiting or diarrhea;
- General malaise, excessive tiredness, new body aches
- New congestion, excessive or constant cough, sore throat, thick yellow or green mucus/runny nose;
- Contagious illnesses such as impetigo or conjunctivitis.

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

- Fever-free without fever-reducing medication for a full 24 hours;
- Diarrhea-free for a full 24 hours;
- Vomit-free for 24 hours;
- If taking medication for a communicable illness, on it for at least 24 hours;
- Able and willing to tolerate food/water.

Please do not send your child to school if you do not want them to go outside to play. Everyone goes outside every day, with rare exceptions for extreme weather. Again, if your child cannot participate fully as expected during the school day, your child should be at home to rest and recuperate. If your child is staying home ill, please be sure to phone the school at 781-729-2689 to let us know your child will be out and why. If you get voicemail, please leave a message. We need to know that your child's absence from school is no cause for alarm, and notification of communicable illness is very important for us and other families in the school. When we know of a communicable illness in a classroom, we will notify the appropriate members of the school community.

School/Classroom Illness Closure Policy

In recent years, COS has experienced instances where the school or a classroom was closed because we were not able, due to staff absence related to illness, to maintain safety ratios as required by our licensing agency. Similarly, we have closed when a highly contagious illness such as norovirus is identified and widespread—this requires closure for disinfecting.

We are staffed to allow for staff absences due for illness. However, in the event of multiple staff absences where COS cannot maintain safety ratios, we will close. Families will be alerted to closure as soon as possible. If staff absence will continue to be problematic beyond a one-day closure, COS will implement a daily rolling classroom closure, allowing those 2 classroom teachers to be shifted to cover a different classroom.

No Smoking

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

Hand Washing/Sanitizing

Children and staff members are required to wash hands with soap and water throughout the day, but at these times in particular:

- Before eating or handling food;
- After going to the bathroom or assisting in toileting;
- After contact with bodily fluids or secretions (i.e., sneezes, coughs, etc.);
- After cleaning areas contaminated with bodily fluids;
- After handling classroom pets or their equipment.

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

Medication Administration

- If your child requires prescription medication during the school day, you must complete a Medication Consent Form (one is included on the last page of this handbook).
- All medication must be provided by the parent with written instructions from a health care provider. Medication will be administered exactly as indicated by physician's orders.
- COS staff are not allowed to give the first dose of any medication, prescription or over-the-counter.
- All prescription medications must be in the containers in which they were originally dispensed and with their original labels affixed. Over-the-counter medications must be in the original manufacturer's packaging.
- Unused or expired medication will be returned to the family.
- Whenever a child is given medication at COS, it will be documented.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In the event of an emergency, the director, or designee if the director is not on-site, will determine whether the emergency warrants an evacuation or shelter in place. The director and the school are set-up to receive emergency alert notifications from the town of Winchester via text and email.

In the event of evacuation, we will follow the plan for exiting the building used for drills. Under this plan, the lead teacher for each classroom is responsible for taking the daily attendance information and emergency binder with them on their way out of the building. The assistant teacher is responsible for checking the bathrooms and cubby areas for children not in the classroom. Attendance will be taken prior to departing the COS campus to ensure that no children are left behind. The director or designee will call the appropriate town authority to inform them of the school's evacuation.

The Winchester Community Music School located at 407 Highland Avenue will be the gathering place for all classrooms. The classroom teachers will guide the children safely along the sidewalk from COS using crosswalks when required to cross the street. One adult will lead each classroom group while the other follows at the end of the line keeping a visual check that the group stays together. Upon arrival, attendance will be checked again, and all parents will be contacted by phone via the list in the emergency binders.

If the determination is made to shelter in place, all classrooms will gather upstairs in the Green Room.

This classroom space is equipped with a fire door and is located where the interior of the room cannot be seen from outside on the school grounds.

In the event of prolonged loss of power, heat, or hot water, the classroom staff will prepare children for dismissal while the office staff will notify parents to pick up their children.

Monthly Evacuation Drills

Each classroom follows a set procedure for exiting the building and gathering on one of the playgrounds away from the building. The procedures are posted at each classroom exit and drills are conducted monthly.

Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

Every educator is a mandated reporter under Massachusetts law and must make a report to the Department of Children and Families whenever they have reasonable cause to believe a child in the program is suffering from serious physical or emotional injury regardless of where it occurred or by whom it was inflicted.

If a COS staff member is named in an allegation, that individual will be suspended from direct work with children until the allegation is resolved. Families will be informed immediately in writing of any allegations of abuse/neglect involving their child while in care.

Parental Rights

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
 Department of Early Education and Care

MEDICATION CONSENT FORM 606 CMR 7.11(2)(b)

Name of child: _____

Name of medication: _____

Please ✓ one of the following: Prescription: _____ Oral/Non-Prescription: _____

Unanticipated Non-Prescription for mild symptoms _____

Topical Non-Prescription (**applied to open wound/ broken skin**) _____

My child has previously taken this medication _____

My child has **not** previously taken this medication, but this is an emergency medication and I give permission for staff to give this medication to my child in accordance with his/her individual health care plan _____

Dosage: _____

Date(s) medication to be given: _____

Times medication to be given: _____

Reasons for medication: _____

Possible side effects: _____

Directions for storage: _____

Name and phone number of the prescribing health care practitioner:

Child's Health Care Practitioner Signature _____ **Date** _____

I, _____, (parent or guardian) gives permission
 (print name)

to authorize educator(s) to administer medication to my child as indicated above.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ **Date** _____
 For topical, non-prescription **NOT** applied to open wound / broken skin (**parent signature only**)