



**Merryhill
School[®]**

Elementary/Middle School Family Handbook



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1. *Our Philosophy*

Mission & Goals

Our mission is to support the development of students with active and creative minds, a sense of understanding of the world around them, and a passion for life-long learning and service. We stress the total development of each child - social, emotional, physical, and intellectual - in a nurturing, engaging, and respectful environment that supports individual differences and learning styles through developmentally appropriate practices, academically challenging curriculum, and the integration of technology.

We believe that learning and achievement go hand in hand, whether inside or outside the classroom, so we have built programs that meet the highest academic and extracurricular standards. By providing an environment that challenges and nurtures each child's development, our students are able to discover their strengths and respect each other's differences through social awareness. They learn to work together, making the most of everyone's talents.

Our pursuit of excellence as a school depends on each student's desire to pursue his or her talents and academics, athletics, the arts (fine and performing), leadership and service/citizenship. Likewise, we must do our part as a school community to provide the most opportunities possible for each child's growth. We believe this is best accomplished when administrators have a clear vision, a committed faculty, supportive parents, and focused students all working together.

Nondiscrimination

Our school does not discriminate in employment or the provision of educational services on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin, disability, citizenship status, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

We are committed to providing an excellent education to all of our students and are proud to serve a diverse community of individuals, including those with disabilities. As part of that commitment, our school makes its programs and services available on a non-discriminatory basis, including to students with disabilities as defined under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). In accordance with the ADA and as set forth in our ADA policy, we will make reasonable modifications necessary to afford students access to our programs and services. Please contact your School Leader for more information on our ADA policy.

The offering of all programs is subject to sufficient enrollment and classroom space. We may request personal interviews with applicants and parents and/or require a pre-enrollment assessment to determine an applicant’s grade level readiness. A non-refundable assessment fee is due prior to or at the time of the assessment for new kindergarten through 8th grade students. New elementary students, except students entering kindergarten for the first time, will be requested to submit a school recommendation form from their current school. Siblings who meet all admissions qualifications are given priority consideration.

Upon receipt of a completed application and a non-refundable application fee as noted on the application, we will make a decision regarding admissions subject to space availability and the additional criteria outlined above. If an applicant is approved for enrollment, we will provide an enrollment contract to the applicant’s parents/legal guardians. The enrollment contract must be completed and returned to the school and payment made for the designated fee(s) in the stipulated time frame in order to guarantee enrollment.

Ethical Standards

Our school and employees strive to create a school culture based on their Accrediting Agency’s Code of Ethical Conduct (available on the school’s website).

Guide to Terms

We strive to use language that embodies our Culture of Care which emphasizes relationships in schools and workplaces, **and for that reason we use language that supports diversity, inclusion, and belonging.** Throughout this handbook, we use “us” and “we” to refer to us, the School. Where a “School Leader” is referenced, this could be a Head of School, Principal, Assistant Principal, Preschool Director, or another similar title at the School. “Family” or “You” to refer to you as the parents, legal guardians, and other trusted adults that care for your children. We use “Child” to refer to our students, your children.

Please note we also refer to an “Addendum” for additional information that may be more specific to your school or state. Not every school will have an Addendum. To the extent there is more specific information for your school listed in the Addendum, please follow that.

11. Forms & Authorization to Pick Up

Enrollment Forms

Families must complete and submit all required documentation, including application form, tuition agreement, emergency contact form, immunization record and physician's form for their Child. These forms must be kept current throughout your Child's enrollment. Registration paperwork and fees must be submitted annually. Please refer to this documentation for additional tuition policies and procedures.

Authorized Pick-Up/Drop Off

It is very important that your Child's emergency contacts are always kept current. If you have moved or have changed your home or work telephone number, please update the information on our online Family portal, and/or notify the School office immediately. It is our responsibility to ensure we release a Child only to those adults who have prior authorization. Please also review the list of emergency contacts for your Child on the online Family portal and update as needed.

You must sign each of your Infant-Kindergarten Children in and out daily when arriving and departing from School at the front entrance. Additional persons authorized to pick up your Child must also sign them in and out using the same system. Over time, you will get to know teachers and other staff members at our School. While you are learning names and faces, it will be helpful to initiate introductions by greeting the teachers and clearly stating your name and your Child(ren)'s name(s).

If someone other than the previously authorized individuals will be picking up your Child, we must have verifiable written permission from the Family. Photo identification is mandatory for anyone unknown to the staff. A Child will NOT be released without confirming the identity and authorization of the person picking up.

If there is a court order or signed Family agreement in place regarding who has responsibility for a Child on certain dates and times, the Family needs to provide it to the School so we can follow that schedule.

Late Pick-Up

If a Child has not been picked up within 15 minutes of closing time and the Child's Family has not contacted the School, the School Leader will attempt to contact all family members or emergency contact persons listed for the Child. If the Child remains at the center after 30 minutes, we will comply with local regulations for next steps. Fees may be charged for late pick-ups as described in the tuition agreement and fee schedule, or in the Addendum following this handbook, and repeated late pick-ups may result in discontinuation of enrollment.

III. Curriculum

The curriculum is standards-based and meets or exceeds national standards. Standards establish clear goals. They provide teachers, students, parents and administration a shared understanding around expectations for teaching and learning and student outcomes. Teachers use standards to plan, communicate learning goals, instruct, and assess. Teachers pay close attention to students' proficiency, as students work towards their learning goals.

Robust teaching materials, and pacing guides provide teachers with the road map for planning and student success. In planning instruction and learning activities, teachers weave timely themes and skills such as pro-social and life skills, into the delivery of the core content standards; English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. Specialty classes include but are not limited to Art, Music, Technology, Spanish/World Languages, and P.E and Wellness. Instruction is personalized and innovative.

Technology is used with a purpose and is integrated across all grades. For example, devices are used to access digital content, and to redefine teaching and learning through innovative learning activities. Great emphasis is placed on teacher professional development to ensure safe and effective implementation of hardware and software.

Assessments


Assessment is an important part of the teaching and learning cycle. Our curriculum supports an assessment protocol in which assessment data is gathered intermittently and used to guide instruction and personalize learning.

Each Spring, we administer a norm-referenced standardized test in grades 1-8. This type of assessment provides helpful data on each student's overall strengths and potential areas for further growth and challenge. Standardized tests help us make informed decisions at the school level about how we can improve our curriculum implementation to ensure it is relevant for each child.

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed each quarter or trimester. The comprehensive report card assesses academic and social development, and is aligned with academic standards. In order to provide a more comprehensive look at a student's performance and to convey more information about what a student is learning, we use a hybrid report card. The hybrid model includes information on standards mastery in addition to traditional grades.

We pride ourselves on providing clear and detailed communication. Each tool used to communicate



performance, provides rich information for our families and students.

Developmental Progress

Every staff member strives to routinely assess the developmental needs of the Children. If these observations reveal possible developmental delays or special needs, they are brought to Families' attention, along with suggestions for Families to reach out to pediatricians or other support professionals for further assistance. School leadership and families formulate a constructive plan to work with the Child, consisting of two or three interim goals, along with timelines and follow-up discussions to the extent possible.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Our program staff receive ongoing training and agree to follow the ethical responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality when conducting assessments of Children. All information contained in your Child's records is confidential, and anyone not directly involved with the care of your Child or affiliated with state licensing, protective services or other government agencies will not have access to your Child's records without your prior written consent. Families have the right to add information, comments, data or other relevant material to your Child's records as appropriate. Additionally, you may request, in writing, the deletion or amendment of any information contained in your Child's record and we will consider that request in accordance with any applicable court order or signed Family agreement. We are happy to provide you reasonable access to your Child's on-site records.

We ask that you not post any recordings you take at School or at School-related events as they may include other Children or School staff who have not given their permission or consent. Posting recordings, on the internet or in any other public forum requires written permission from the School Leader.

IV. Communications

We take Family communication very seriously. When families and teachers work together as partners in a child's education, the learning experience is richer and more meaningful.

Electronic & Mobile Communications

Our School uses a web-based application ("Application") that helps us meet a Family's increasing expectations for electronic & mobile communications, and that helps make teacher's daily communication and record-keeping tasks easier.

Parent communications and updates are also sent via email, so please ensure that the campus has your most current email address on file. Our goal is to keep parents up-to-date on important school news and events using a variety of electronic means.

More information about the Application is available through the School.

School Events & Activities

We strive to keep Families informed of upcoming events, activities and key dates. The overall school holiday calendar is on the school website, as well as the monthly calendar with all special events. We also issue a monthly school newsletter with calendar reminders, and send emails and alerts via the Application.

V. *Guidance and Discipline*

Behavior Guidance

Our behavioral guidance is constructive, age- and stage-appropriate and redirects Children to appropriate behavior and conflict resolution. We approach discipline with a positive attitude, based on the premise that children respect and care for themselves and others. Our goal is to solve behavioral concerns by using modeling, redirection of behavior, and positive reinforcement through attention and praise. Positive classroom rules, structure and reinforcement help children understand expectations of behavior.

When necessary, staff work with family members and other support professionals to create a plan for resolution. The plan includes positive behavior support, and Families are kept informed of progress. In rare circumstances, and only after all other possible interventions have been exhausted, suspension or expulsion is necessary. We reserve the right to suspend or dismiss a child for harmful or inappropriate behavior in our sole discretion: 1) If we do not have adequate expertise or resources for the Child's educational, medical or other needs; 2) for violations of our policies; or 3) for any reason we determine to be in the best interest of the safety of students and the school. In these rare instances, we may offer Families assistance in locating assistance and alternative placements.

Methods of Discipline

Children find security and direction where there is consistent guidance and routine. It is the teacher's role to assist the child in conducting his/her behavior in a positive manner. The teacher is a "classroom manager," facilitating, observing, and correcting behavior.

Our goal is to teach students to exhibit self-control, while managing his or her emotions and anger by providing the lifelong skills needed to think about actions prior to acting on them. This will serve our students well, as they grow and are faced with other difficult situations, in and out of school.

Our innovative approach can only be accomplished by a consistent, firm, and loving approach. We use the following methods to educate children in this area:

- Redirect behavior and teach conflict resolution skills.
- Teach children the classroom rules.
- Encourage children to 'talk out' their problems and discover a solution.
- Use positive phrases to redirect behavior.
- If negative behavior continues, 'stop and think time' will be used to gain the child's self-control. Children will be asked why they are on 'stop and think time' and how he/she can correct his or her behavior.
- Continued negative behavior will require a parent conference.
- If a child's behavior does not improve, the child may be placed on detention, suspension, probationary enrollment, or expulsion.
- No corporal punishment, including but not limited to spanking, hitting, slapping, tapping, and pulling on any part of the body, will be used.

Family Conflict Resolution Procedure

We encourage open communications between Families and staff, so they may work together for the benefit of the children. Families can interact with their Child's teacher and other staff members daily during our school's normal hours of operation, subject to any applicable security of classroom management procedures. Families may also interact with the School Leaders informally and/or by appointment. In many cases, Families and school staff can resolve any concern or conflict that arises.

Protocol for Expressing Family Concerns:

- Make an appointment to see the teacher and discuss the matter. We are committed to the process of communication being safe and respectful, without retaliation.
- If after discussing the matter with the teacher, the Family is not satisfied, please make an appointment to see the School Leader about the matter.
- The School Leader will discuss the matter with the teacher and, if necessary, a meeting with all parties will be arranged. As School Leaders are the key decision makers for their campus, we strongly encourage Families and School Leaders to work closely to resolve any concerns.
- If the matter is still not resolved, and a mutual consensus cannot be reached, it may be in the best interest of all parties to end the relationship.

All students, families, teachers, and staff have the right to a safe and disciplined school community. With this right, comes the responsibility and accountability to promote a respectful school environment for all. We understand that sometimes emotions regarding a child or a situation at a school can run high. However, we expect that Families and Teachers will treat each other respectfully and professionally. If a Family's behaviors disrupt the learning environment or school operations, or if it becomes too difficult to have a positive or constructive relationship with the School, the School may take immediate action. If at any point, a Family's behaviors pose a safety threat to our students, staff or property, we reserve the right to limit that Family's entrance to our schools. This limitation could include expulsion of the Child if the behaviors escalate despite our best efforts.

VI. Health

Our Commitment to Health and Safety

Providing a healthy and safe learning environment for our students is our highest priority. In addition to following our school's comprehensive health and safety practices, we regularly adjust our operations to meet or exceed the most current guidance from local and state health departments during this time of heightened vigilance related to COVID-19.

Our enhanced health and wellness protocols include:

- Repeated disinfecting/cleaning of "high-touch" surfaces throughout the school day and in the evenings (including desks, doors, public spaces, and bathroom fixtures)
- Frequent and thorough handwashing by students and staff, actively encouraged throughout the school day
- Ensuring all staff and students who are feeling ill stay home until they recover
- Finally, guidance regarding wearing facial masks/coverings is evolving, and we will update Families accordingly.

Medical and Immunization Records

Prior to enrollment, all students must have an updated medical form on file, including a current list of state required vaccinations and screenings. All state-required immunizations must be completed unless Families produce the required documentation for applicable exemption. If a currently enrolled Child or staff member has a medically compromised immune system, our school will evaluate whether a child who is not fully immunized may be newly enrolled. If a Child is not fully immunized for a disease which occurs in the school, that child will be excluded from all activities until any danger of infection is past.

Only those directly involved with the care of your Child or affiliated with state licensing, protective services or other government agencies will have access to your Child's records. Others may access these records only with your written consent.

Food and Nutrition

Where offered, we provide Children a nutritious lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks. We follow government child nutrition guidelines for the amount and type of food we provide Children at snack times and meals. Menus are posted on our school website as well as in school for Families to review. Fresh fruits and vegetables are thoroughly washed before serving. No plastic or Styrofoam containers, bags, plates or wraps are used to reheat Children's foods or drinks.

Children with special feeding needs are referred to our ADA Compliance Officer for creation of a modification plan. Please see the Allergies section for more information on food allergies.

See Expectation Guide for your schools nutrition options.

Illness

Families assist us in maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all our Children by keeping sick Children at home. The purpose of our sick child policy is to:

- Reduce the spread of illness from a sick Child to other Children and members of School staff.
- Promote complete recuperation of the sick Child.
- Prevent the constant spread of cold, flu and diarrhea and other communicable diseases such as COVID-19 that are common among small children.


We reserve the right to refuse admittance to any student who shows a sign of illness. Children who become ill at school will be made comfortable and Families will be notified to pick them up within one hour. Families must keep sick Children at home until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours* if they display any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or more. Children must be free of fever for at least 24 hours, unassisted by fever-reducing medication before returning to school.
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore Throat
- Skin Rash
- Head Lice
- Heavy nasal discharge requiring frequent wiping every 3-5 minutes
- Persistent, non-productive or “barking” cough
- Fussy, cranky behavior unlike the Child’s normal demeanor
- Symptoms of communicable disease such as pink eye, measles, chicken pox, mumps, or strep throat

The length of time Children should stay out of our School depends on whether they have COVID-19 or another illness. Please see your School Leader for updated guidance.

Medication Administration

Whenever possible, prescription or over the counter medication should be administered at home or by a Family member who comes to the school for that purpose. We encourage Families to ask their Child’s physician to prescribe or recommend medications in such a way that they do not need to be administered during the school day. If the physician determines that the medication should be administered during the school day, we will consider such requests in accordance with state and local regulations.



When we agree to administer prescription or nonprescription medications, the Family must provide a note from a physician requesting us to administer the medication, with detailed dosage information, circumstances or schedule of medication administration, and any adverse reactions that could occur.

The medication must be in a new sealed container. Prescriptions must be in the original pharmacy container or box, with the official pharmacy prescription label securely attached. The prescription indicated on the label must be current. **Families cannot premix medication into food or a bottle before bringing it to school.**

School administrative staff must keep the medication and a copy of the physician's note stored in the locked medicine location, unless otherwise indicated. School administrative staff complete the dispensing log after each dosage, recording the name of the Child, the medication and dosage given, the time and date, and signature of the person dispensing. Epi-pens and other emergency medications may be stored in either the normal locked medication cabinet or a secure location in the classroom. Note that Families with Children who have medical conditions requiring the presence of an Epi-pen or other rescue medication may be asked to follow our ADA process, requiring approval and development of a modification plan. See Allergies section for additional information.

If the medication request is for any medication that requires specific skills or prior medical training to administer, Families may be asked to follow our ADA process, requiring approval and development of a modification plan. Families must first make a written request for their Child and provide it to the school with the physician's note including the requirements referenced above. We will submit the physician's note and request to be evaluated and approved. In some instances, we may require additional information or documentation, and we will work together with Families to prepare a modification plan. Please contact your School Leader for more information on our ADA policy.

Clothing & Personal Belongings

Children must wear comfortable, washable, seasonally appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes. Please see your schools Expectation Guide for uniform options.

Families with children in Kindergarten or younger must provide a labeled bag with a change of clothing (including socks) for their Child to be kept at school for emergencies. All items must be labeled with the Child's name.

Sunscreen

Families must provide written permission for school staff to apply sunscreen on their Child. All bottles must be in the original container, labeled with the Child's name.

Allergies

Families are expected to inform the school about their Child's allergies. Each child should have a Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan ("FARE Plan") or similar Emergency Care Plan (e.g. for FPIES) listing their allergies, recommended treatment in case of an allergic reaction, prepared by Families and the Child's physician. Children's allergies are posted in the classroom as well as the kitchen. Some Children may need immediate intervention for an allergic reaction which may include administration of medication or an injection device, such as an Epi-pen. Families and School leaders will work together to ensure understanding about the allergies, FARE Plan, and supporting medical documentation provided by the Child's physician. Children with life-threatening allergies are referred through our ADA process for creation of a modification plan. Please contact your School Leader for more information on our ADA policy.

Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All staff members are mandated by law to comply with the child abuse and neglect reporting requirement. The law requires any person working in a school or child care setting who has knowledge of or observes a child whom she knows, or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect whether within the school or outside of school, to immediately report it to the applicable state child protective agency.

Teachers and staff are responsible for monitoring their own behavior and the behavior of other staff members and must immediately report to the principal any observations of an employee violating either licensing regulations or company policies. In addition, upon starting employment every staff member is required to participate in training on sexual abuse and molestation prevention.

Those who in good faith report neglect or abuse by a family member or co-worker are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary actions for having made the report.

We take allegations of neglect or abuse very seriously. Once the allegation is reported, we will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep confidential the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject.

VII. Security & Safety

Building Access

Access to our building is limited to enrolled families, staff and registered visitors. Access may be through a buzzer or keypad. Where there is a keypad lock on the front door, **Families of enrolled Children and school staff are the only people given the code.** Do not share your code with anyone else, and do not allow people to enter behind you without permission of the leadership team. The keypad code is changed on a regular basis.

Visitors other than enrolled Families cannot enter our school unless escorted by a staff member. All visitors, including vendors, applicants and family members are required to wait in the lobby/reception area until escorted by a staff member.

Accidents & Injuries

The health and safety of both Children and staff in our school are of paramount importance. All employees are expected to assist in the prevention and control of injuries, illnesses and hazards and to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Staff members inspect their classrooms and outdoor play areas daily for potential hazards.

If a Child experiences an accident, injury or possible injury, staff will report it to school administration and a written incident report will be provided to Families. Families will also be immediately contacted if the injury needs medical attention. For any serious accident or incident, we will attempt to notify Families by a telephone call as soon as possible.

Staff members are trained in first aid and CPR. If a Child requires medical attention, a report is filed and sent home to Families. In the event of a serious emergency, the school will secure immediate medical attention as described in the “authorization for medical treatment” section of the tuition agreement filed in the school office. Every effort will be made to contact parents, guardians, or authorized family members or friends during such emergencies.

Fire and Other Safety Drills

As required by law, our school holds regular fire and safety drills. It is expected that all Children on the campus at the time of such drills participate fully. If a drill must take place in inclement weather, all attempts will be made to ensure that Children are properly attired. Should you find yourself at the school while a drill is taking place, please participate with your Child, and take the time to review and discuss the importance of such drills with your Child.

Lockdown

If an emergency requires lockdown, we will notify Families as soon as possible. All entrances to the school will be secured. No one, including Families, will be allowed to enter or exit the building. The lockdown will be lifted when we receive notification from law enforcement officials.

Weather Emergencies

In case of severe or hazardous weather, we may have to close or delay school opening hours. We will make every attempt to list closings and delays on the school website and to notify Families by email and text alert whenever possible.

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies during the school day, it may be necessary to close school early. We will notify Families by phone, email and/or text to pick up their child before the designated emergency closing time. Where applicable, bus/van services will make independent decisions regarding inclement weather procedures. Families will be informed of these decisions.

In an emergency, immediate decisions may be made. We will make every attempt to contact you, authorized family members, or specified friends. If you are going to be out of town, please notify your emergency contacts and let us know whom to contact in an emergency.

Vehicles on School Grounds

Because the safety of our Children is of paramount concern to us, we require all Families to adhere to the following rules of the road while on school property:

- All vehicles must obey the 5 miles per hour speed limit.
- Pedestrians always have the right of way.
- Parked vehicles **MUST** have ignitions turned off and the keys removed.
- Children may **NOT** be left unattended in a vehicle at any time or for any reason.

Violations of these rules may result in a warning. If a violation is serious, or violations continue, school personnel are authorized to take a tag number to report to local police.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Child's Name (please print) _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

This Family Handbook was created to promote an understanding of the school's policies and procedures.

The information in this handbook applies to all activities occurring on school grounds, school buses, and during any school-related activity. It is important that Families and Children are familiar with these expectations.

This signed page will be added to your Child's permanent file. Your signature means that you have received this Family Handbook and understand the policies and procedures of our school.

I have read and understand the policies and procedures in the Family Handbook. I agree to abide by them as will my Child(ren).

Full Name

Relationship to Child

Family Signature

Date

Full Name

Relationship to Child

Family Signature

Date