

# Litchfield Montessori School

## PARENT HANDBOOK



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[www.litchfieldmontessori.org](http://www.litchfieldmontessori.org)

## **Purpose and Use of this Handbook**

This handbook contains information that all parents need to know. We ask that each parent take the time to become familiar with its contents and the information available on the school's website. Please sign the affidavit acknowledging that you have read and reviewed this handbook through the link provided during registration. Any questions about policies and procedures outlined in this handbook may be directed to Head of School, Diane Hart ([headofschool@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:headofschool@litchfieldmontessori.org)) or Assistant Head of School, Betsy Johnson ([bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org)).

## **Our Mission**

We are committed to serving the whole child, guided by the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, dedicated to nurturing the child's love of learning, preserving the child's sense of wonder, encouraging independence and fostering respect for our world's social and cultural diversity.

## **About Us**

Established in 1972 by Mary Loyer, Litchfield Montessori School offers an exceptional education to children aged 15 months through 12 years. We serve the children of families from 20 surrounding communities.

Litchfield Montessori School is a classic Montessori school fully recognized at the primary level by the Association Montessori International (AMI), accredited by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), and is a founding member of the Montessori Schools of Connecticut. An independent school, LMS is governed by a Board of Trustees, which is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the school's mission and securing its future. The Head of School, who reports to the Board, is responsible for the management and daily operation of the school. LMS is a not-for-profit institution.

The faculty and staff of the school are a caring community of individuals dedicated to providing the best possible educational experience for our students. As mentors and role models, we strive to maintain and model exemplary standards of personal and professional behavior. Our community is based upon trust, mutual respect and communication amongst all members of our school community—students, faculty, staff, and parents.

Litchfield Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or disability in the administration of its educational program, admissions or other school policies.

## **Office Hours**

School Year: 8 am - 5 pm (Monday – Friday)  
Summer Hours: 9 am - 12 pm (Tuesday – Thursday)

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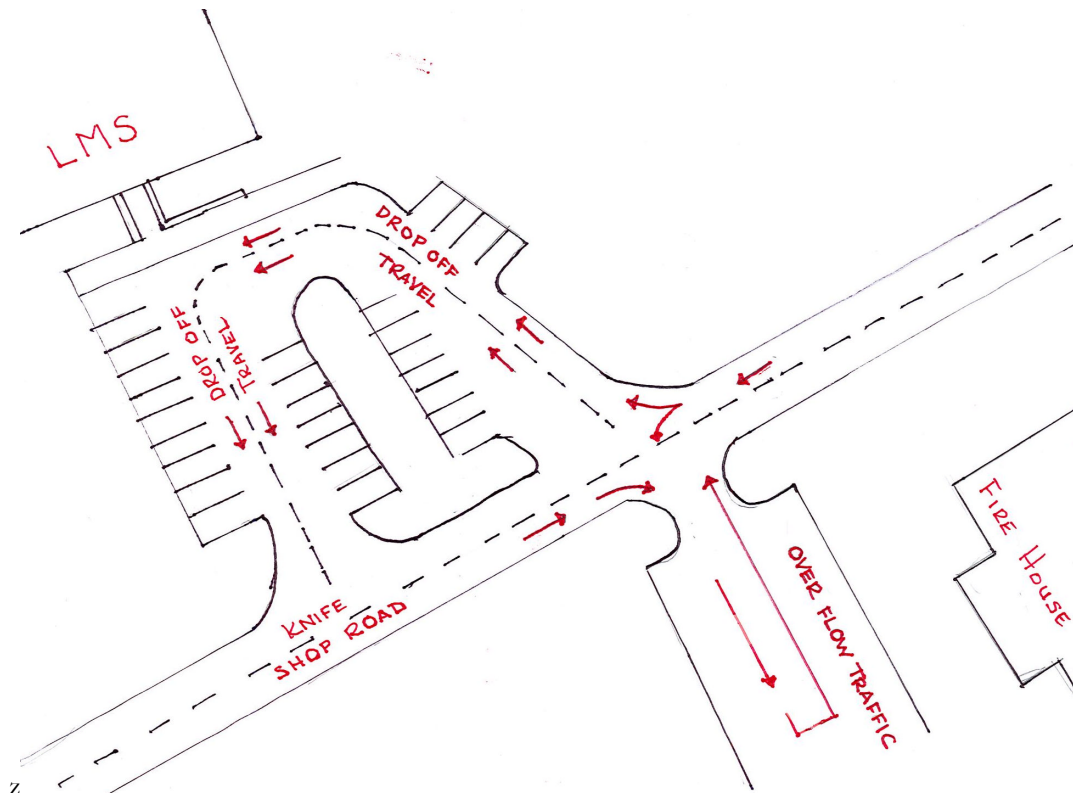
## ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

### **Traffic Flow and Parking**

The flow of traffic through the parking lot is **one-way**. Please observe the Enter and Exit Only signs when entering and exiting the parking lot. The driveway closest to the fire station is **Enter Only** and the driveway closest to Rt. 254 is **Exit Only**.

There are two lanes for incoming traffic, the drop-off lane and the traffic lane. If you need to keep moving forward or if you would like to park, you may use the travel lane (on the left). At arrival and dismissal, we encourage parents to use the drop-off lane (on the right) to drop off and pick up their children. This may sometimes cause traffic to back up on Knife Shop Rd., especially at dismissal. If there is no more room in the drop-off lane, we ask parents to pull into the Northfield Fire House parking lot to **avoid blocking regular traffic on Knife Shop Road** (see diagram below).

If you need to come into the school at arrival or dismissal, please use the traffic lane to find a parking spot. **Please do not leave vehicle unattended in the drop-off lane.**



### **Arrival**

The arrival procedure is designed to promote your child's preparedness for class and ease separation anxieties, which are a natural part of growing up. This is also an important part of the Montessori experience.

**Early Birds** opens at 7:45 a.m. **Regular Drop-off** begins at 8:15 a.m. and classrooms open at 8:30

a.m. If you arrive after 8:45 a.m., please park, walk your child to the front door, and ring the bell. A staff member will greet you and escort your child to their classroom.

Faculty/Staff members are at curbside to assist your child’s arrival beginning at 8:15 a.m. If you arrive prior to that time, please park, walk your child to the front door and ring the bell. A staff member will greet you and escort your child to their classroom for **Early Birds**.

Please form a single line of traffic in the drop-off lane by the curb for arrival and dismissal. A Faculty/Staff member will escort your child to and from the school. As a courtesy to other parents, **please do not leave your car while in line** as this causes traffic to back up. If your child has items to unpack, please use the travel lane and pull into a parking space.

If you do park your car and walk your child to the school entrance, please say good-bye outside of the building. We wish to encourage each child’s development of independence by allowing him/her to enter the school on his/her own.

Please make every effort to arrive on time. When children enter the classroom late, the sense of order is compromised, and the peacefulness of the classroom is more difficult to maintain. Teachers ask for your help in having children arrive on time and ask that you allow your child to walk into the building on his or her own.

**Dismissal**

Children will be dismissed individually from their class’s waiting area. For your child’s safety, the front office must have permission if someone other than the parent/guardian is picking the child up from school. Please send in a note or call as soon as you know alternative pick-up arrangements have been made to give the office staff time to share this information with faculty and staff responsible for dismissing students.

**Regular Dismissal Schedule:**

- 11:45 a.m. Young People’s Community & Children’s House – Mornings only (no lunch)
- 12:30 p.m. Young People’s Community & Children’s House – Mornings with lunch
- 3:00 p.m. Young People’s Community and Children’s House - Full Day
- 3:15 p.m. Elementary
- 3:15 – 5:00 p.m. Aftercare

**Half-Day Dismissal**

Morning students are dismissed at the normal time.  
Full day students are dismissed at 12:45 p.m.  
No Aftercare services are available on half-days.

**Late Arrival/Early Departure**

As a simple matter of safety, we need to know if your child will be late or leaving early. If you arrive after 8:45 a.m., please park, walk your child to the front door, and ring the doorbell. A staff member will greet you. Please sign the log in the school office. A staff member will escort your child to their classroom. If you need to pick up your child early, please notify the office in advance. Upon arrival, a staff member will escort your child from the classroom. Please sign him or her out in the office.

### **Inclement Weather Days**

The school communicates via text and email to notify parents in the event of a delay or closure due to inclement weather. In addition, notices of closings and delays will be relayed to local Radio WZBG (97.3) and the following television stations: Channel 30 (WVIT-NBC), Channel 3 (WFSB-CBS) and Channel 8 (WTNH-ABC). WFSB also offers text alerts. You can sign up on their website.

### **Delayed Opening**

In the event of a delay, classes begin at 10 a.m. with no Early Bird care available. The building will open promptly at 9:45 a.m. Please be aware that teachers will arrive at 9:30 a.m. and will need 15-minutes to prepare their rooms. No students will be admitted to the building prior to 9:45 a.m.

### **Carpools**

Please notify us of the adults who are authorized to transport your child to and from school. Forms for this purpose are available in the Front Office or on the Parent Portal of the school's website. Any changes to these forms need to be made in advance, in writing, to the Front Office. For the safety of your child, we will only dismiss children to authorized adults. If you would like to volunteer to transport students for an event or field trip, we ask that you complete a form and provide the office with a copy of your driver's license and insurance well in advance of the trip. As a small school, we appreciate parent volunteers who can help make these experiences possible for our children.

### **Parking and Speed Limit**

The flow of traffic through the parking lot is **one-way**. Please observe the exit and enter only directions when entering and exiting the parking lot. The speed limit for the driveway is 5 mph. Please be vigilant of the whereabouts of children when entering and when backing out of parking places. Please park your car only in the designated parking spaces. Do not park your car at the curb. There is extra parking available across the street at the Northfield Fire House. **Never leave your car running or children unattended inside your car.**

### **BEHAVIOR**

We are a community based on respect. This includes respect shown towards each other, to oneself and to one's environment. Behaviors such as: hitting, punching, pushing, striking, spitting, or using any part of one's body against another in anger are never acceptable.

Conflicts that do arise will be resolved through positive discipline and peaceful conflict resolution techniques. In the event that a child is physically aggressive towards another or uses threatening or violent language, the response will be tailored to the age of the child and the particular situation. A very young child may be redirected, or a young child may have a brief "time out," sitting on a chair at the edge of the classroom activity until he/she is ready to talk about the conflict. An older child may have a "time out" in the Front Office before all involved talk together to resolve the conflict. An incident report will be filed with the Head of School, and the parents of all the children involved will be contacted at or prior to the end of the school day. Depending on the severity of the behavior, the consequences range from a short "time out" in the office to being sent home for the remainder of the day.

Every student is afforded the chance to make a mistake and learn from it. However, if a problem persists, parents will be asked to come in and will be included in seeking resolution to the problem behavior. If the child persists in the unprovoked, willful hurting of others and does not respond

to intervention techniques, they will be suspended from school. Continued negative behavior will result in the school requiring a behavioral evaluation by a professional, and the possible removal of the student from the classroom or school.

## **BITING POLICY**

Biting is a form of communication and almost always occurs when a child's needs are not being met or when they are having difficulty coping with a challenge or stressor. The following intervention is used in any situation where a child has bitten another or where biting has become a pattern.

Staff will chart every occurrence of biting, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present and the circumstances leading up to the behavior. This information will be shared with the Head of School and with the parents of the children involved. The staff will "shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite in order to head off biting situations before they occur. Teachers will instruct students on alternative responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior. They may also adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs by adjusting the level of freedom to move around the classroom. In situations where biting has become a routine behavior, teachers and the Head of School will hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action and conduct follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed. If the pattern persists after these interventions, the school will prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from the classroom for the duration of the biting stage. In this event, the school will help the parents make contingency plans.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Website**

Our website contains useful information. Parents may subscribe to the school calendar. All students will be furnished with an LMS# on a card. Parents will use this for registration and permission forms online.

### **Weekly News**

In the effort to be ecologically responsible, we send out a weekly update of calendar events, special happenings and announcements via email only. Grandparents or frequent caregivers are welcome to join this mailing list by informing the Front Office. If you are not receiving these weekly updates, please make sure we have your correct email address.

### **The Seed**

The school newsletter, "The Seed", is published once a year and mailed to all parents, grandparents, and alumni. It is also available on our website.

### **Contacting Faculty & Staff**

If you want to talk with your child's teacher, please communicate with them during their office hours using Remind or ask the Front Office to set up a time to talk. Classroom preparation is very important for teachers as is their personal time outside school hours. We ask that you do not walk into your child's classroom to communicate with the teacher. If you have a written communication for a teacher, please give it to the Front Office for delivery.



If you have concerns about any aspect of your child's classroom experience, we urge you to contact your child's teacher immediately. If the situation is not resolved after a conference with your child's teacher, please contact Betsy Johnson, Assistant Head of School, or Diane Hart, Head of School, for further support.

- General information may be obtained by writing to: [office@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:office@litchfieldmontessori.org)
- Billing questions should be directed to Donna Fortier at: [businessmanager@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:businessmanager@litchfieldmontessori.org)
- Admissions and Student Services questions should be directed to Betsy Johnson at: [bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org)
- Questions about the program or the policies in this handbook should be directed to Head of School, Diane Hart, at: [headofschool@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:headofschool@litchfieldmontessori.org)

## **DRESS CODE**

All children should have clean clothing that allows them to run, climb, work, and play freely. Please do not send your child to school in fancy dress clothes or garments that inhibit full exploration of the classroom offerings. Please follow these few simple rules:

- **Please label all clothing, shoes, and backpacks with your child's name.**
- Clothing with flippable sequins, pop culture references, cartoon characters, or designs inspired by the latest media craze are not appropriate for school.
- Students should keep an extra set of clothes at school in case their clothing becomes wet or soiled.
- Clothing should be appropriately modest.
- All students keep a pair of **indoor shoes** at school. These should be hard or rubber soled, but flexible.
- Shoes should be manageable by the child.
  - All shoes and boots should be simple enough for the child to put on him or herself without difficulty. Avoid complicated laces for young children.
  - Please no flip-flops or clogs, including Crocs, and no shoes with lights.
- Children should be prepared to go outside regardless of the weather. If your child is not well enough to go outdoors, he or she should remain at home.
- We go outside in the rain. If it is raining, students should be prepared with rain boots, a rain jacket, and rain pants.
- During the winter months, all students should have snow boots, snow pants, warm jackets, hats, and gloves.
- Please leave precious items such as sunglasses, hats, jewelry, and toys at home. The classroom does not have storage for these items during the day and it is easy for them to become lost.
- Special occasion dress is required for various presentations, outings and ceremonies during the school year. In those instances, students should wear a collared shirt, dress pants, a skirt, or a dress.

### **Lost and Found**

- **We cannot return lost items if they are not labeled!** Please label all of your child's items.
- Unlabeled items will be put in the Lost and Found, which will periodically be laid out so parents can claim missing items.

- At the end of each month, this bin will be emptied. Any unclaimed and unlabeled garments will be donated to charity.

## **EARLY BIRDS & AFTERCARE**

### **Early Birds**

Early Bird care is offered from 7:45 a.m. - 8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. If you need to drop off your child early on occasion, please feel free to make use of this service. In order to ensure we have adequate staffing, please let the Front Office know in advance if you intend to routinely drop off early.

### **Aftercare**

This service is available on a reserved space basis for students of all ages. Please contact the front office if you plan to use this service routinely. Aftercare is offered from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The fees for aftercare are \$24 per hour per child per day and billed in 15 minute increments.

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

### **Allergies**

The school cannot guarantee that your child will not be exposed to conditions that may cause your child to have an allergic reaction. It is your responsibility to notify the school of your child's sensitivity to such conditions prior to enrollment, so the school can ascertain whether it can reasonably accommodate your child's allergy.

Any child who has an allergy must have an Allergy Action Plan on file with the school. The Allergy Action Plan is completed by the child's physician.

Litchfield Montessori School is a NUT FREE facility. Please do not send nuts, nut butters, peanut butter or anything containing nuts in your child's lunch.

### **Child Abuse Prevention**

Litchfield Montessori School will act at all times in accordance with the policy and procedures regarding the prevention of child abuse as declared by the State of Connecticut. As a school, we have an absolute legal duty to report suspected child abuse. If we suspect child abuse, we must follow the procedure outlined below:

- In cases where the child's parent or guardian is suspected of abuse, the faculty or staff member suspecting abuse must report it to the Head of School. Abuse may also be reported to the Business Manager, or the President of the Board of Trustees, who will in turn notify the Head of School. In the presence of the Head of School or with the Business Manager, or President of the Board of Trustees, the faculty/staff member will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and report the situation.
- In cases where a school employee is suspected of child abuse, the suspected abuse must be reported to the Head of School. Abuse may also be reported to the Business Manager, or the President of the Board of Trustees, who will in turn notify the Head of School. In the presence of the Head of School, Business Manager, or President of the Board of Trustees, the faculty/staff member will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the State Police to report the situation.

- In a case where the Head of School may be suspected of abuse, the suspected abuse must be reported to the President of the Board of Trustees. Abuse may also be reported to the Business Manager, who will in turn notify the President of the Board of Trustees. In the presence of the President of the Board of Trustees, or with the Business Manager, the faculty/staff member will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the State Police to report the situation.
- All reports of suspected child abuse will be confidential, to be shared with appropriate school personnel as determined by the Head of School.

### **Health & Safety Protocols**

We learned a lot from our experience with COVID-19. We rely on Health & Safety guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the Connecticut Department of Education and the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. It is important to recognize that all health and safety risks posed by COVID-19 and other communicable diseases cannot be eliminated despite the implementation of reasonable and age-appropriate precautions and protocols. We rely on families to help keep everyone at school safe by doing their part to keep sick children home.

Please keep your child home if he/she has symptoms of illness. Fever, a sore throat, a cough or greenish colored discharge from the nose are clear signs of illness. In the event of fever that is not related to COVID-19, students may return to school after they are fever-free for **24 hours** without the use of fever reducers. (Please note that the duration of time a child must remain out of school for fever related to COVID-19 is different). When students come to school sick, they jeopardize the health of their schoolmates, faculty and staff. The school may send a child exhibiting symptoms home.

Parents should notify the school in the morning if their child is sick and will not be coming to school. If your child has a communicable disease, i.e., strep throat, G.I. ailments, respiratory illnesses, etc., please notify the school, this information will be relayed to the school nurse consult, who will track instances of communicable diseases.

- **When to keep your child home from school:**
  - He or she has a fever.
  - He or she has tested positive for Covid-19.
  - He or she doesn't feel well enough to attend school and you have made the judgement that they need to rest or see a healthcare provider.
  - It has been less than 5 days since the onset of Covid-19 symptoms or a positive test.
- **If a student presents symptoms of COVID-19**
  - Please test your child right away and continue to test for a few days.
- **If a student has been directly exposed to someone with COVID-19:**
  - He or she should test right away and continue to test for a few days.
  - Send him or her to school with a mask.
- **If a student tests positive for COVID-19:**
  - He or she will stay home for 5 days and return to school wearing a mask for 5 more days. (This protocol is based on current CDC guidelines and subject to change.)
  - Please let the office know as soon as possible.
- **If a student develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school:**
  - The student who is ill will leave the classroom" while their parents are contacted to pick them up. They will be monitored by one of the administrative staff members,

who will dismiss them to their parents.

- Parents must have a plan in place to pick up any sick child within **one hour** of being notified that their child is displaying symptoms.
- **Frequent hand washing:** Students will be taught how to properly wash their hands and will be reminded to wash their hands frequently.
- **Cough and sneeze etiquette:** Children will be reminded to practice good personal hygiene, to cover all coughs and sneezes with their hand or elbow, and to wash their hands with soap and water immediately after covering a cough/sneeze.

### **Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol**

No alcoholic beverages or marijuana may be used on the school premises. This includes inside the building and within the legal limits of the school's properties. The use, possession, distribution, or sale of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia is strictly forbidden on school property. Litchfield Montessori School is a **smoke-free** environment, this includes vaping devices.

### **Emergency Care**

In the event of an emergency requiring prompt medical treatment, parents will be contacted immediately. In the case that your child must be transported to the hospital, if circumstances allow, they will be taken to the hospital of your choice. Otherwise your child will be taken to the closest hospital – Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington or St Mary's Hospital in Waterbury. The Registration Forms giving permission for treatment, permission for pickup, allergy, and medical conditions must be on file at the school. **Your child cannot start school until these forms have been submitted to the Front Office.**

### **Health Forms**

Health Assessment forms are available in the Front Office and can be downloaded through the Parent Portal. Health Assessments document that physical examinations and immunizations are up to date and **must be on file prior to the first day of school.**

The State of Connecticut requires **every pre-school aged child** (birth – 5 years) to have an Early Childhood Health Assessment and complete immunization record (including influenza) completed by a licensed practitioner on record prior to beginning school. **This Early Childhood Health Assessment must be updated annually.**

The State of Connecticut also requires **all enrolled children ages six and up** to have a Health Assessment Record completed by a licensed practitioner on record prior to starting school. This Health Assessment will need to be updated in the sixth grade.

### **Immunizations**

The State of Connecticut requires that each child be protected by adequate immunization against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, MUMPS, rubella and influenza (influenza required for children ages 4 and under) before being permitted to attend any school. If you are seeking exemptions to this policy, please consult your pediatrician.

- **Religious Exemption:** Only children registered for Kindergarten on or before April 28, 2021 who have a religious exemption on file at that time are exempt from mandatory immunization.

## **Pediculosis (Lice) and Nits**

Please notify us immediately if your child has head lice.

Any staff member who suspects that a student has head lice will report this to the Head of School, who will inform the school's nurse consultant. The Head of School or school nurse will notify the parent and offer verbal and written recommendations for treatment. Students may return to school after treatment is completed. On return to school the Head of School or school nurse consultant will offer a re-check to be certain that there are no live lice.

## **Medication in School**

Parents of students receiving or taking any medication at school must submit the completed Authorization for Administration of Medication form, which must be signed by both the child's physician and their parent. Medication must be in its original packaging and the label must match that listed on the Administration Form. Administrative personnel will administer the medications to the student according to the physician's direction on the authorization form. Unless stated in a child's 504 or Allergy Action Plan, ALL medicine, including over the counter drugs, vitamins and naturopathic remedies are to be kept in the Front Office.

## **Nutrition**

We encourage whole food lunches and snacks that are naturally low in sugar and contain a healthy balance of protein and complex carbohydrates (ie. fruit, veggies, pita bread, brown rice, flatbreads, yogurts and hard-boiled eggs). Please avoid items with high sugar, artificial flavoring, coloring and additives. Do not send in candy, cupcakes, carbonated drinks, gelatin, etc., and processed items such as "Lunchables." By giving your child the responsibility of packing his/her own lunch and a nutritious snack each day, the child learns valuable practical life experience, establishes healthy eating habits at an early age and is more likely to finish their meal at school.

### *Snacks*

Parents provide healthy snacks for the classrooms on a rotating basis. Details are classroom specific and will be provided by your child's teacher. This practice provides a variety of basic nutrition lessons for the children. Children should also bring a snack from home, preferably packed in a container separate from lunch.

### *Lunch*

YPC-Full Days, CH-Full Days and all Elementary children will bring their lunch each day. Please be sure to provide a well-balanced meal, including a beverage. Hot items should be packed in a thermos and cold items with a freezer pack. When choosing a lunch box, consider one that is easy for your child to open independently.

## **School Nursing Consultant**

The school receives nursing support through the Litchfield Public School system. They provide our standing medical orders, review our policies, carry out yearly vision and hearing screenings, and are available on an as-needed basis to deal with questions relating to student health issues.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **After School Enrichment Clubs**

The school offers fall, winter, and spring sessions of After School Clubs for an additional fee. Information about current offerings is sent to parents at the start of each season. Registration is based on a first-come, first-served basis, and classes may be cancelled if enrollment is insufficient. Classes are held immediately after school.

If you are interested in teaching an After School Club, please contact Betsy Johnson at: [bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:bjohnson@litchfieldmontessori.org).

### **Birthdays**

*In-School:* If planned in advance with the classroom teacher, children may celebrate their birthday in school. Please give the teacher two weeks advance notice.

Celebratory snacks for an in-school celebration might include fruit kabobs, tiny whole-grain muffins, sliced berries with whipped cream or special breads. Please do not send high sugar candies, frosted cakes, cupcakes, or party hats.

*Out of School:* Please do not send party invitations to school with your child. Please do not bring birthday gifts to school. If you are planning a party for your child, a class list with the names and contact information of all families enrolled your child's class are available through the Front Office.

### **Class Lists**

By mid-September, each family can have a class list by emailing Michelle Augustine: [office@litchfieldmontessori.org](mailto:office@litchfieldmontessori.org)

### **Change of Address/Telephone Number**

It is extremely important to notify the Front Office of a change in address and/or telephone numbers. This information is critical in case of an emergency. Please notify us immediately of any changes that apply either to home or to work.

### **Electronic Device Policy**

For the last several years, the age at which children have access to electronic devices for playing, reading, texting, and engaging in social media has become younger and younger. While we acknowledge that technology can have a positive role in children's lives, and that it is up to each family to set their own standards regarding their children's use of technology and social media platforms, we also strongly believe that the use of technology is not fundamental to, nor prioritized in, a Montessori learning environment. In fact, the possession of electronic devices can be detrimental and distracting to the social, emotional and academic goals of our school. For that reason, no electronic devices will be permitted to be sent to school with children.

*Electronic devices include, but are not limited to cell phones, E-readers (Kindle, Nook, etc.), iPods, iPads, tablets, mp3 players and gaming devices (Nintendo, PlayStation, etc.).*

Upper Elementary students, in the sixth year, carry out many in-depth research and writing projects. Some children find it to their advantage to use a laptop computer for this work. Laptop computers may be used only under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher and only for the purposes of

school work. The use of technology by students must be academically appropriate (no social media or inappropriate web searches) and lawful. Laptops are not to be used in Early Birds, Aftercare or at recess. Litchfield Montessori School, its faculty and staff, are not responsible for any electronic devices that are brought to school and then lost, damaged or stolen.

Parents are asked to please not use their cell phones while on school grounds or sitting in the pick-up or drop-off lane. It is so easy to reach for the cell phone when we have an occasional moment where we aren't occupied; however, when you are picking up your child from school you have a rare opportunity to truly connect with your child. It is in this moment where you can really take the measure of their day. Please remember that it is impossible to be fully present for your child if your attention is diverted by a telephone conversation, text, or email. It can also cause a dangerous distraction during a time when there are lots of cars and people in the parking lot.

### **Gifts to Faculty and Staff**

At the holidays and the end of the school year, many parents wish to show appreciation to their child's teacher(s). Appreciation may be shown in a variety of ways such as a card or gift that is handmade, baked, or sewn.

### **Television and Media Use**

In order for your child to obtain maximum value from the Montessori classroom, we ask you to set quality standards for television and media use. Please monitor all television programming, and the activity and duration of time that your child spends on electronic media. We particularly request that **children do not watch television or play on electronic devices before coming to school in the morning.**

### **Toys**

Students should leave toys, security blankets, pacifiers, handheld computer games, etc. at home. Books, gentle music, cultural items or items from nature to share with the class are always welcome. Make sure these objects are labeled with your child's name, so they can make their way home.

### **Tiny Objects**

Very often, children bring some of the school's classroom materials home. These are usually little things that fit easily into pockets and which cannot be easily replaced (puzzle pieces, etc.). If you discover your child has something unfamiliar, it might be part of our Montessori teaching materials. Please do not make a fuss or attempt to shame and punish the child. We rather the child is encouraged to return the material in an honest and upfront manner, as the child's intentions are probably good. Items should be directly returned to one of the staff members.

## **OUR PARENT PARTNERS**

### **Shared Trust**

Parents are our essential partners, both in the education of your children and in sustaining the school. As parents, you depend on us to maintain health and safety protocols that create a safe, clean, and nurturing environment for your child to learn. In turn, we trust that parents will share relevant information about potential exposure to health concerns that may impact other students and adults in our school community.

### **Visiting the School**

Parents will be able to enter the building on Friday's during Coffee Hour or by appointment for Parent-Teacher conferences, meeting with administrative staff, observation, or parent-education events. We will reach out with opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school community. Please let us know if you have special skills you would like to share.

### **Community Circle – Parent Education**

We have a monthly parent education program called Community Circle. As parents lead busy lives, we try to make this program as convenient for parents to attend as possible. There are evening events that meet over the course of the school year, and include such traditions as Lesson Night, Project Night and the Silent Journey, among others. Community Circle may also take place in the afternoon at 3:15 p.m. During this time, various topics will be discussed with the Head of School, a faculty member, or a guest speaker. We provide childcare for all Community Circle events at no cost to parents. It is expected that parents will attend these events at a minimum of twice per year.

### **Field Trips**

Learning experiences in the surrounding community are an important part of our program. The school welcomes ideas for field trips appropriate to the school's mission. For local field trips (within a short drive from school) parents may be asked to drop off and pick up children at the field trip location. For trips of a longer distance, the school will obtain a school bus driven by a properly licensed driver, or volunteer drivers will be arranged. Any parent, faculty, or staff member who volunteers to drive must submit a volunteer driver form, copies of their driver's license and car insurance, as well as their social security number allowing enough time for the Front Office to clear a background check and safe driving record.

When a field trip is planned, teachers will send a permission slip for parents to review and sign, as well as details about the trip, packing list (if necessary), and driving directions (if necessary). We collect all permission forms electronically.

### **Fundraising**

Like all independent schools, we depend on voluntary financial support to meet our annual operating costs, as tuition revenue only covers 80 percent of the cost of educating your children. We need all LMS families to contribute. There are important times of year when making even small contributions can earn our school extra money. Please participate by donating in whatever amount your family can afford. Watch for emails, especially during our launch in the Fall and during the GiveLocal event. In addition to the Annual Fund, we rely on parent-organized events to help raise funds and build community. Our largest fundraisers are our annual Wine & Beer Gala and Sixth Year Trip fundraisers. Parents are asked to help promote events, solicit sponsors, and are encouraged to participate. If you



would like to be a part of planning for a fundraising event, please reach out to the head of school. Putting together events can be as fun as it is essential to the sustainability of the school.

### **Observation**

Parents are welcome to observe in the classroom. It is especially helpful for parents to observe twice during the year, especially prior to Parent-Teacher Conferences, to gain a fuller impression of the work of the classroom. A staff member will be on hand following your observation to answer any questions you may have, or you may schedule a meeting with the teacher to follow up.

The school-wide season for classroom observation begins the second week of October and ends the last week of April. Please contact the Front Office to make an appointment.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/Teacher Conferences are officially held twice during the school year. Conferences are scheduled online. We urge all parents to make a special effort to attend these conferences. This is a special time for parents and teachers to share information, to ask questions and to obtain insights into the child's progress. Childcare is provided during conferences.

Conferences can be initiated at times other than the established conference periods by either parent or teacher on an as needed basis. These conversations are important and require the full attention of the parent and teacher, so please refrain from discussing your child's progress at the busy drop-off and dismissal times or during transition times.

### **Progress Reports**

Written progress reports are sent home twice a year, after the close of the winter and spring terms. YPC reports are completed once, at the end of the year. These reports become part of the student's permanent academic record.

### **Resource Library**

We want you to be educated parent partners. The library in the front foyer contains a selection of books on subjects of interest to our parents: child rearing, the social and psychological development of children, Maria Montessori and Montessori education. Donations and appropriate recommendations to the bookshelf are welcome.

### **Parent Volunteers**

Please let us know if you are willing to leverage your skills to support our school. Below is a short list of ways you might like to become involved:

- clear paths or do other grounds maintenance for our wilderness program
- sponsor another family's snack week
- provide refreshments for Grandparents' Day, Harvest Lunch, or another school event
- help with classroom projects, such as preparations for the school play
- bake with children for special fundraisers or bake sales
- chaperone or drive for class trips (Submit a form and copy of license, insurance, and ss#.)

## **SAFETY**

To ensure the safety of all students, staff and visitors at Litchfield Montessori School, the following procedures have been established:

**Emergency Drills:** School Emergency Drills are held throughout the year. These drills are held at different times during the school day. When an alarm is sounded, all persons visiting the school must exit accordingly. Emergency exit signs are posted in every room and throughout the building. All are to gather on the field until the “All Clear” is sounded.

**Lock out/Lock down:** In the event of a lock out or lock down, please do not call or come to the school for the safety and well-being of the children, yourself and our faculty and staff. If the school dismissal procedure should be delayed or the pickup location changed, you will be notified promptly.

**Extreme Emergencies:** In the case of a natural disaster or man-made occurrence that hampers travel and/or communication, the school and staff will be prepared to offer safe harbor to all children for 24-hours. We realize our parents will strive under any difficult circumstance to obtain their children, yet we recognize planning for the uncertain would offer some peace of mind. In that situation, the school will be in contact with the Town of Litchfield for emergency service updates.

### **Supervision**

In the mornings, staff members will be outside to greet students beginning at 8:15 a.m., at which point the faculty and staff of LMS assume responsibility for the supervision of children. Once the formal drop-off period has ended at 8:45 a.m., parents must supervise their child entering the school, sign the child in with the Front Office, and have someone from the office escort the child to their classroom. (Late drop-off is disruptive and strongly discouraged.)

All children on school grounds during school hours will be supervised at all times. Children will be supervised by the adults responsible for the programs into which they are enrolled, or by their parent, or by another adult designated by the parent. Children may not roam throughout the school or its grounds without supervision. Once a student has been dismissed to their parent after school, the parent assumes full responsibility for the supervision of that child, even if they remain on school grounds (please see Playground Rules).

### **Playground Rules**

Meeting on the playground after school is a wonderful way to strengthen and build friendships with children from other classes. However, it is very important that the school’s playground rules remain in effect regardless of whether or not school is in session, as it is easier for children to understand and respect expectations when they do not change based on who is watching them.

These expectations cover not only the use of the equipment, but also how children are expected to treat each other, take turns, etc. The children all know these rules, and parents should too!

- When school is in session, the playground is not open for free play.
- Children’s House and younger children need to stay on the playground and field. **They may not enter the woods.**
- Shoes must be worn on the playground and on school grounds.
- No one should be climbing up the slide, only travelling downward.

- While a few playground pieces are designed for climbing (monkey bars, etc.), there is no climbing of trees, fences or playground equipment not intended for climbing (for example, the swings).
- Children should be cautious while playing tag and other running games and take care not to push people, especially if they are running.
- No one should pull on anyone's clothing or throw anyone to the ground. No one should hit, punch, kick or otherwise hurt others.
- No one should run with sticks or throw any object that is not a ball.
- Please include everyone in your games and activities.
- If children have a problem, they should seek the help of an adult.

Please note the use of the woods is a privilege only extended to **Elementary children**. Even after school and with adult supervision, younger children are not allowed in the woods. When in the woods, **elementary children are expected to stay within the defined boundaries**.

### **Use of the playground after school**

- Children in the Aftercare program will be directly supervised by the Aftercare staff.
- All children that are using the playground after school, but are not signed into Aftercare, should be **within the eyesight and under the direct supervision of their parent or guardian at all times**.
- The playground rules are in effect both in school and after school.
- Children that are observed breaking the playground rules or that are unsupervised will be returned to their parent.
- If a child consistently breaks the playground rules after school, or a parent or guardian consistently leaves their child unsupervised on the playground after school, the Head of School will be notified and an action plan will be designed to ensure the safety of the child after school. This action plan may include the loss of after school playground use.

Please talk about these rules with your child(ren), and pass them on to any babysitters, grandparents, and other caregivers that may spend time on the playground with your children. Thank you for your support in helping us keep the playground expectations consistent.

### **Visitors**

Parents will be granted access to the building for the purposes of Parent-Teacher Conferences, observations, meetings with administrative staff, coffee hour, or small group parent education events. These meetings/visits must be scheduled in advance or signed up for in advance (parent-education). If a parent or visitor comes into the building for a scheduled meeting during the school day, they will need to sign in at the lobby. Once inside the building, if school is in session, it is important not to disrupt the quiet, focused learning cycles taking place in classrooms. Staff will support visitors with information about their role in maintaining the Montessori environment.

If you need to pick up your child for an appointment, please notify the Front Office. The information will be passed on to the appropriate classroom. This will allow the child and teacher time to transition from classroom activities and be ready for departure. Your child will be brought to the office for dismissal. When you arrive, please call the office and a staff member will escort your child to the car and assist you with signing them out of school.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT/ASSESSMENT**

Our programs are based on the educational, philosophical, and psychological research, principles and method of Dr. Maria Montessori. Our school serves children aged 15 months through 12 years. Many details of our program are available through the school website.

### **Academic Work**

To help us follow the child's progress, most work is kept at school. Periodically, class work will be sent home with your child for parents to review. This is especially important prior to Parent-Teacher Conferences. Artwork will come home periodically.

### **Attendance**

Good attendance is critical to academic success. We ask parents to partner with the school to ensure that their child maximizes their instructional time during the school year.

Parents are responsible for:

- Getting their children to school in a timely manner
- Limiting vacation absences to planned school vacation times
- Whenever possible, scheduling appointments after classroom hours
- Notifying the office when their child will be absent and for what reason

The School is responsible for:

- Keeping accurate attendance records
- Following up on unexcused absences
- Identifying students with irregular attendance and following up with parents and caregivers to support the student's return to school.

Excused Absences include:

- Illness or injury
- Family emergency or death in the family
- Medical or dental appointments
- Observance of religious holidays
- Educational testing or educational support services
- School visits for students moving on
- Other absences as approved by the Head of School

Unexcused Absences: Absences for reasons other than those listed above are considered unexcused. Connecticut State Law considers any student that has four unexcused absences in one month or 10 unexcused absences over the course of the school year to be truant.

Chronic Absence: Chronic absence is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason including excused, unexcused and disciplinary absences. Chronic absences is a proven predictor of academic failure and dropout rates.

Tardiness: Excessive tardiness (more than 10 incidents) is educationally detrimental and will necessitate a conference with the parents.

Once the Head of School has determined that absences or tardiness have begun to negatively affect a student's school experience, a meeting will be held to develop a plan for improved attendance. If there are a large number of absences for illness, a doctor's note may be required to excuse such absences.

### **Exceptional Abilities Team**

The Exceptional Abilities Team was created to address the different learning needs of our students. The Team comprises of the Head of School, the Reading Specialist, and the child's classroom teacher. This team may also include an Educational Consultant, a Speech and Language Consultant, an Occupational Therapist, Birth to Three specialists or any other outside consultant that may be of service to the child.

### **Homework**

Dr. Montessori believed that if we do not dictate the work of the child in class, then it does not make sense to dictate the work they choose at home. Therefore, traditional homework is kept to a minimum. The Montessori Method supports the idea that children spend all day in the classroom learning and need their afternoons and evenings to pursue their personal interests or to interact with their families.

Many traditional homework assignments, such as worksheets, are rote work that has little effect on a student's overall academic performance. Homework for the Montessori child may take many forms, and most of all should promote a lifelong love of learning. Children may encounter a concept at school that they wish to explore further at home, or vice versa. Many other activities may constitute homework, including household chores.

Responsibilities at home help the child develop language skills and cultural awareness. Making math a real part of the home environment (pairing socks and counting by twos; dividing a pizza into equal pieces; shopping and making change) and giving the child a voice in family decisions are important to the child's perception of math concepts and economic geography. Reading with and to your children every day will result in quality family time and confidence building.

At Litchfield Montessori School, teachers do not typically assign homework until the Upper Elementary level. Although assignments will not be lengthy, at this level students will learn to use a planner, as well as organize and keep track of due dates and homework assignments. In the sixth-year, homework responsibilities will increase. Sixth-year students participate in several intensive research and writing projects. These student-directed projects require that revisions and some independent writing be completed at home.

### **Moving On**

Montessori curriculum is designed in cycles of learning—most often a three-year span. The scope of the curriculum is covered by attendance in a class for at least three years.

Students are assigned to a particular class primarily on the basis of age, but other criteria for determining placement are:

- Past performance
- Parents' perceptions and attitudes
- Teacher evaluation of a student's progress
- Intellectual ability based on tests and teacher observation

- Academic achievement and results of achievement tests
- Physical, social and emotional development
- Attendance record
- Remedial resources available

At times, based upon several factors, children complete this cycle in four years. In this event, parent conferences will be part of the decision for moving on.

### **Testing/In-School Assessment**

At times, assessments are used for diagnostic information useful to faculty in addressing individual student needs.

Fourth through sixth year students take sub-tests of the Stanford Achievement test in the spring. The Stanford Achievement Test are given in the classroom setting.

### **Technology**

At Litchfield Montessori School, we seek to employ technology in the classroom as a means of supporting student learning, research, and success in a fashion that is age-appropriate and that respects the guiding principles of Montessori education. Only students in the Upper Elementary classroom may use technology, such as a computer, iPad, tablet, etc., in the pursuit of their studies, and then only under careful supervision.

The school's information technology resources, including email and Internet access, are provided for educational purposes. If you have any doubt about whether a contemplated activity is acceptable, consult with a teacher to help decide if a use is appropriate. Adherence to the following Acceptable Use Agreement is necessary for continued access to the school's technological resources. This agreement will be reviewed and discussed with both parents and students, and both must sign the agreement before students begin working with computers in the classroom.

### **Procedures for use:**

1. I understand that the computer is for school-related assignments only.
2. I will follow my teachers' directions and use the computer correctly.
3. I understand that I must have a teachers' permission to print writing or pictures.
4. I will not install software, shareware, freeware, or apps on school computers.
5. I will not access or display inappropriate or offensive material on school computers. This includes computer desktops and screensavers.
6. I promise to stay out of websites not approved by the teachers.
7. I will not access personal email, instant messages, chat rooms, online music or game sites, or personal websites at school.
8. I understand that I must have teacher permission to access music or videos on the Internet and that these are restricted to school assignments only.
9. I will not use the computer to harm other people or their work.
10. I understand that vandalism will not be tolerated.
11. I also understand that teachers may look in my school Google account at any time.

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