

FOREST HILLS

MONTESSORI SCHOOL

20 Brookley Rd., Jamaica Plain MA 02130 • (617) 477-3779

**PARENT
HANDBOOK**

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TERMINOLOGY

Note that throughout this handbook we use the term “parent” or “parents.” The term refers to the biological parent(s), stepparent, or legal guardian of the child.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Forest Hills Montessori School (FHMS) provides high quality childcare and education to children from eighteen months to six years of age. Our aim is to have a racially and culturally integrated facility both with the mix of faculty and children.

We employ the Montessori philosophy of teaching. In this method the environment is prepared to allow for maximum freedom of movement and choice. The materials are arranged to allow the children to engage in the widest possible range of activities without interfering with one another. The orderly arrangement of the materials helps to define their use. It also provides the security young children need and helps them make independent and responsible use of their freedom. In a Montessori classroom, limits are defined clearly and purposeful activity is encouraged. Children are able to concentrate without distraction. This is one of the best methods to allow children to move from the physical world where they can develop their motor skills and all their senses into the abstract world of ideas and concepts.

We request that **parents supply community snacks and lunch** for the children and we encourage parents to limit foods containing refined sugar and preservatives. Snacks can include fresh fruits, whole grain breads and crackers, baked goods made with a minimum of non-refined sugars and natural fruit juices. (*See section on Suggested Lunches for some ideas.*)

NON-DISCRIMINATION

FHMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, political belief, disability, sexual orientation or marital status of the parents.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

In order to apply to FHMS it is necessary for the parent(s) to attend an open house or schedule a private tour. During that time the head teacher and/or director will be available to answer questions and explain the workings of the center. If the parent(s) want to apply for enrollment a non-refundable enrollment fee is required. Parents will be directed to the website for all the necessary enrollment forms. All forms must be printed and mailed or otherwise delivered to the school office.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Parents are to be aware of the policies and procedures governing the center. They are to read the following information and sign a parental agreement stating that they understand and agree to the principles stated. Parents will be notified if there is any change of educators in the classrooms.

LICENSING BODY

The Department of Early Education and Care at 1250 Hancock St., Suite 120-S, Quincy, MA 02169 is our licensing body. They can be reached at 617-472-2881. You may contact them to obtain a compliance history of the Forest Hills Montessori School.

THE CLASSROOMS

The classrooms at FHMS are divided into two age groups: toddlers and the preschool children (which include the kindergarten children). All classrooms open to accept children at 8:00 AM.

The toddler children awaken to the joy of connecting with people outside the family. They want to learn to take care of themselves little by little, but they still need the nurturing of a trusted adult. They are aware of their needs, and they are learning vocabulary to express them. They are beginning to develop concentration and focus, as well as balance and coordination. The classroom environment invites exploration of child-sized materials that are based on activities of the home, such as food preparation, table setting, washing, polishing, and pouring. Toddlers are encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves. Teachers work with toddlers on expressing needs and feelings verbally. Group activities such as circle and snack also help develop social skills. Most importantly, the toddler teachers recognize the significance of each child's early experience in learning to trust and work with adults outside the home.

Children gain language and math skills as well as solidify their sense of group or community. These children learn to cooperate and "use their words" to resolve differences. With fewer children than in the preschool room the teachers can guide these children through their toilet training experiences. Here the children learn the basics of operating in a Montessori classroom while in a cozy, nurturing environment. Their room incorporates more complex tasks and materials and a greater emphasis on independence from adults.

In the preschool room children are mixed in ages within a three-year developmental span. Mixing ages enables the older, more socially advanced and capable children to become role models for the younger ones. With the larger class size, respect for oneself, for others, and for the environment, form the basis for all classroom rules. We allow for each child to work alone, with a friend, or in a group, and to progress through the curriculum at his or her own pace.

There is freedom of movement in the Montessori classroom allowing children the opportunity to learn to control their bodies in a defined space and helping them to develop motor coordination and control. The curriculum includes materials to cover the entire span of children's interests and abilities up to the oldest and most accelerated students in the class. It is a highly enriched learning environment. The third year is often the most rewarding for a child. It is in this pivotal year that the child gains the self-satisfaction of mastering the tasks of the preschool classroom, before moving on to the next environment.

Many of the children in the third year of the program perform addition, multiplication, subtraction, and even division using the Montessori materials. They have a firm grasp of the continents along with a great deal of exposure to the field of social studies. They read simple books, create words and short sentences using the Montessori materials, and write enough words to compose very short stories. They progress in their everyday living skills to complex activities such as sewing, food preparation, shoelace tying, etc. The third year is often an explosion of "academic" learning, whose groundwork has been laid by the activities of the first two years.

FACULTY MEETINGS

When faculty meetings occur on a regular school day, FHMS closes at noon. Refer to the "List of School Closings" for complete details.

HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS

FHMS will be closed on the following holidays when they occur on a weekday:

Sept.	Labor Day
Oct.	Columbus Day
Nov.	Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
Dec.	Christmas Day, Christmas Eve
Jan.	New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day
Feb.	President's Day
Mar.	Evacuation Day
Apr.	Patriot's Day, Good Friday
May	Memorial Day
June	Bunker Hill Day

FHMS is closed for vacation weeks that coincide with Boston Public Schools' vacation weeks (Winter Recess, February Recess, and Spring Recess), as well as the week including Independence Day, and the week before Labor Day.

PAYMENT

Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must select a payment plan at time of enrollment. Any change in payment plan needs to be submitted in writing to FHM for approval. The non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of enrollment along with enrollment form and Enrollment Agreement. The enrollment fee is not applied to the yearly tuition.

- Annual Payment Plan - Tuition is to be paid in one lump sum payment by September 1st of the enrollment calendar year. \$300 discount if paid on or before August 1st.
 - Trimester Payment Plan - Tuition is to be paid in three equal installments.
 - Monthly Payment Plan - Tuition is to be paid in ten installments.
1. Tuition payments are made through FACTS Tuition. With the Monthly Payment Plan, tuition is collected by the end of the month proceeding the payment month. If there is a

change in financial information, you will need to log onto your FACTS account or call the school office for assistance BEFORE the next scheduled payment.

2. A full month's payment is required for the months that include holidays and vacation weeks.
3. Tuition payments are required when the child is out for family reasons.
4. A late fee will be charged for any late pick-ups of your child. Rates are: \$1.00 PER MINUTE. These fees will be enforced, as late pick-ups cause tremendous inconvenience for the faculty members. We will keep a written record of late pick-ups and parents will be billed through FACTS.
5. If parents choose to pick up an extra day, it first needs to be approved by the office and the cost is \$100 per day. The fee will be charged through FACTS Tuition.
6. Parents who are enrolled in a four day schedule may not "make up" days if The School is closed on one of their scheduled days.

Registration for returning student is \$300.00 and is due at time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable and is not deducted from tuition. Re-registration forms are sent out on the first week of February. Forms must be completed and returned, along with the \$300 fee and enrollment agreement within seven business days. Your child's seat cannot be guaranteed if we do not receive the forms by the date they are due. The enrollment agreement can be found on the school website.

YEARLY TUITION COST AND FEES

As these change each year the rates for the current year can be viewed online at www.foresthillsmontessori.org. Tuition and fees are non-negotiable.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES

- FHMS is open from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM. Parents should arrive no later than 5:20 PM to ensure that they are out of the school by 5:30 PM.
- Drop-off times are between 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM for all classes.
- Pick-up times are between 3:30 PM and 5:15 PM.
- If a child will be late please call the school.
- Children must be picked up by 5:30 PM or a late fee will be levied and you will be billed accordingly [see Payment (4)].

WE expect children to arrive no later than 9:00 AM The structure and continuity of the children's activities are disrupted by late arrivals. A child who arrives when other children are cleaning up for snack or preparing for a group activity can feel frustrated and usually has a more difficult day.

It is very important for the well-being of your child that you arrive on time. If you must drop off late due to an appointment or extraordinary circumstances please make sure to call or email the office. **Children cannot be dropped off after 10:30 AM.**

OUR SCHOOL CLOSSES AT 5:30 PM. If your child is staying until the end of the day, **please be here by 5:20 PM** so we can complete our closing in a timely fashion. A child who is picked up late can get anxious, and teachers who have worked a full day need to be able to count on leaving their job promptly. Being on-time is a significant contributor to the job satisfaction of all of our teachers and the happiness of our children. We pride ourselves on being a school whose parents are on-time and strive to have no violations of this rule. If you do expect to be late, please notify the school so your child can be prepared for the delay. Late pickup fees may be assessed.

PARENTS ARE TO PROVIDE

- ✓ Diapers and wipes for all children requiring them.
- ✓ One complete set of extra clothing for those in the preschool, two sets for those in the toddler program:
 - shirt or blouse
 - socks and/or tights
 - sweater
 - pants/overalls/dress/skirt
 - underwear
- ✓ It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that their child has this complete set on hand, e.g., if a child comes home wearing the extra underwear, for example, then please be sure to send along another the very next day. FHM will have extra clothes available in the event that the child does not have extras in his or her cubby.
- ✓ One pair of slippers (or indoor shoes) for the child to wear indoors during the day. It protects our floors, helps keep the rooms clean, and ensures that the children have dry warm feet all day.
- ✓ One crib-sized blanket for children who nap and a noiseless soft stuffed animal or doll for sleeping if desired.
- ✓ A refillable water bottle with cap.
- ✓ Parents are required to provide lunch. There is no refrigerator available for foods so please use ice packs in your child's lunch box if necessary.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL BELONGINGS MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED.
THIS INCLUDES BOTTLES, BLANKETS, TOYS, LUNCH BOXES,
KNAPSACKS AND CLOTHES.**

HEALTH

1. Parents must provide a written statement signed by a physician or a health agency confirming that the child is in good health and indicating any conditions that may require special care. This must be done once a year, even if a child is already enrolled.
2. Parents must also provide written proof of immunizations.

3. FHMS is not equipped to care for sick children. If a child becomes sick during the day, he or she will be kept away from the other children. The parent will be notified immediately to come to pick up the child.
4. No child shall be allowed to attend if he or she is sick, contagious, feverish, coughing, or carrying parasites. Contagious conditions include wet coughs, excessive sneezing, runny noses with opaque, colored mucous (clear mucous is acceptable), fever within the last 24 hours, and diarrhea. Children who are obviously lethargic and listless should not attend regardless of whether or not they are contagious. It is each parent's responsibility to help insure a healthful environment by making conscientious decisions about his or her child's own state of health; **FHMS reserves the right to determine that a child is sick or contagious, etc.**

If a child is too ill to go outside to a playground when the class goes out, then that child cannot attend school. We cannot keep a teacher inside with one child and still maintain proper and safe ratios of teachers to children.

5. No medication will be dispensed without the following:
 - a) A written statement from a doctor (which can take the form of a prescription on the label), indicating frequency and amounts in which it is to be given.
AND
 - b) A medication form signed by a parent giving the faculty permission to dispense medication as explained in the doctor's statement.
6. The faculty will keep a written record of the time and amounts of medication, which will be given to the parent at the end of the week. Over-the counter medications cannot be administered without a doctor's written authorization.
7. The first dose of any kind of medicine must be given at home.
8. In case of a medical emergency requiring hospital care, the faculty will provide first aid and CPR, if necessary, call 911, call Boston Children's Hospital, then call the parent(s). We will use a faculty person's car to take the child to the hospital or wait for an ambulance, whichever we deem appropriate after the phone calls. If parent(s) cannot be reached, the emergency person indicated on the child's enrollment form will be contacted. If the contact cannot be reached, the family doctor will be contacted. If the doctor cannot be reached, we will continue with the before mentioned emergency procedures.

TOILETING POLICY

Toilet training is a significant focus for parents in the early toddler years. Easy computer access to a number of different "experts" on the matter—sometimes with contradicting information—can make it challenging for parents to know what and what not to do.

In actuality, toilet training is not as difficult a process as some have made it out to be. More problematic is the stress parents experience when attempting to make their child fit a particular expert's training model, or set themselves up with expectations of a specific (usually too short) timeline for "success." There is also considerable confusion in understanding the difference between a child who is actually trained and a toileting routine that, by luck, catches toddlers when they need to use the toilet.

In any case, the wide variety of routines, experts and varying success rates have led to the need for FHM to establish a uniform toileting policy. The intent is to stave off both stressing the children and frustrating parents. The policy is firm. It is as follows:

1. When there is a decision to begin toilet training at home, parents will inform the teacher(s) in their respective classroom. It is a good idea to check with a child's teacher(s) before beginning training, as their years of experience and personal knowledge of each individual child can help with assessing whether or not the child is actually ready.
2. Teachers will (as always) support training with prompts and other guidance as appropriate and necessary.
3. ALL toilet training children must come to school with either a pull-up or diaper. We do not allow children to come to school "commando" (without underwear at all) or with underwear until we have had the opportunity to assess their success in the school environment.
4. The decision for using a pull-up as opposed to a diaper depends on each child and how far along they are in their training. Teachers, in conversation with parents, will assess which will be used. Teachers will inform parents of progress and readiness to transition to underwear.

Toilet training must be a team effort when children spend a significant portion of their day at school. Though we understand that there may be children trained at home, it is not uncommon for training at school to take longer. There are many more distractions and events at school—outdoor playtime or circus for example—that can affect the timing of toilet training. Staff must also be mindful of what is safe, appropriate and sanitary for the entire group. Parents should, furthermore, expect training to take months, not days, to accomplish successfully. It is important to be consistent, patient and to drop all timelines. Your child will indeed be diaper free some day! That is a promise! That is also the goal of every teacher. Toilet training is not a barometer of anyone's parenting skills or of a child's abilities. Let it be a natural, peaceful process that suits your child. We stand by you fully throughout.

FIELD TRIPS

Children will be taking occasional field trips. Parents will be notified in advance of these trips but will not always be asked to provide written permission. Parents are required to sign a general permission slip that will be kept on file. Parents are responsible for any fees incurred (e.g., admission fees). We use only the MBTA or a chartered bus for these field trips; for safety purposes we do not use personal cars. Parents are encouraged to participate in the field trips and at times we will specifically request parental assistance.

We use the parks and playgrounds of the Southwest Corridor, Rossmore/Stedman Tot Lot, and the Minton Stable space daily. We walk or use the Orange Line (one to two stops) to reach some of these play areas. While out of the building we carry a backpack with first aid materials, epi-pens, and emergency phone numbers. A minimum of two teachers are always with the children while outside so one teacher can handle an emergency while the other teacher(s) remains with the children as necessary.

COLD WEATHER GUIDELINES FOR RECESS

Fresh air and exercise is an important part of the school day. Time spent outdoors gives students the opportunity to engage in activities that allow them to relax from the structure of the classroom for a short while. It is difficult to set guidelines that fit every circumstance and condition in regards to outside activity during cold weather. Forest Hills Montessori Schools will make decisions for outdoor recess based on weather conditions reported for zip code 02130 at www.weather.com.

These are the guidelines we go by in regards to modifying school recess that deal with temperature, wind chill, age of students, length of time outdoors, adequacy of clothing of the children and the condition of the playground and sidewalks

1. When properly clothed, the children can participate in safe, vigorous play in an outdoor environment in most weather conditions. Increased caution will be practiced when temperatures are below 30 degrees, including the wind chill factor.
2. When temperatures fall below 20 degrees including the wind chill, students are kept indoors ("feels like" temperature based on www.weather.com for zip code 02130). All children must come to school wearing appropriate clothing for cold weather activities. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure their children come to school dressed appropriately for the weather.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

In order to cultivate communication, continuity and consistency between home and school, mandatory parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year; once in mid-December and again at the end of May. Parents are encouraged to request additional conferences throughout the year if desired. The teacher may also request additional conferences if necessary.

TERMINATION

When a parent wants to terminate the child's enrollment at FHMS, a notice of two months at a minimum is required. Ideally, a parent should let FHMS know as soon as he or she knows.

To avoid termination by FHM, the administration at FHM will meet with the parent and discuss the issues, together we will revisit the school handbook. We will work with the parent to correct the issue(s) at hand. If the parent is not willing to cooperate with FHM, or follow our policies, we will notify the parent in writing of our terms. If after a week the parent is still not cooperative FHMS will terminate the child's enrollment.

FHMS will terminate a child's enrollment at the Center for (but not limited to) the following:

1. Nonpayment of tuition. When tuition is one week late, a notice will be emailed to the parent. Failure to pay or to establish a payment plan acceptable to FHMS within one week will be cause for immediate termination.
2. Lack of parent cooperation in:
 - a) Establishing a workable plan for children requiring additional educational or social services. If, after two meetings with the parent, FHMS faculty members feel that the parent is not cooperating, the parent will be given two weeks notice, in writing, to find another place suitable for the child.
 - b) Following the policies of FHMS regarding: drop-off and pick-up times (excessive dropping off at odd times causes the child to be disoriented and alienated from the group; excessive picking up after closing hours causes the child to feel abandoned and causes the faculty inconvenience), illness, providing lunch, providing appropriate clothing, discipline (too large a discrepancy between how the child is disciplined at home and the discipline policies at the Center can cause anti-social behaviors in the child), and parents' presence in the classroom. If, after two meetings with the parent, FHMS faculty members feel that the parent is not cooperating, the parent will be given two weeks' notice, in writing, to find another place suitable for the child.

PLAN FOR REFERRAL TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Children and their families will be referred to the proper outside agency on a case by case basis. Generally the decision to refer will be made by the director after consultation with the faculty members who work most closely with a specific child. These referrals are under "Child Find" governed by the Early Intervention Regulations (34 C.F.R. 303.321) consistent with Part B of IDEA 04 (34 C.F.R. 300.128). The decision to refer a child will be made when conditions including, but not limited to, the following, exist:

Developmental Delays: A child will be referred to their home school district or certified Early Intervention programs serving their home city or town when he or she is manifesting significant delays in the development of fine or gross motor skills, speech and language development, eye-hand coordination, or other physical development including seeing and hearing, strength, and endurance.

Learning Disabilities: A child will be referred to their home school district or certified Early Intervention programs serving their home city or town if indications of learning disabilities are observed. These include difficulties in processing, delays in visual recognition, withdrawal from the environment, excessive undirected activity, poor attention span, incomplete comprehension, inability to follow through, weak problem solving skills, or any behavior which would indicate non-age appropriate development of cognitive skills (inability to use toys and materials at age appropriate levels).

Socialization: A child will be referred to their home school district or certified Early Intervention programs serving their home city or town if he or she is manifesting significant delays in development of social skills. These would include continued withdrawal from other children or adults, speech and language delays, excessive aggression, inability to work within a group (at age three and up), consistent inability to make eye contact, etc.

Emotional Development: A child will be referred to their home school district or certified Early Intervention programs serving their home city or town when delays or problems with emotional development are indicated by behaviors including but not limited to the following: excessive aggressive behavior, excessive levels of activity, withdrawal from peers and/or adults, unusually difficult separation trauma, specific regressions in behavior, e.g., wetting pants frequently or attachment to an object, frequent tantrums, frequent crying spells, lethargy, unusually intense fears, etc.

Physical and/or Sexual Abuse: A child will be referred to the Commonwealth's Department of Children & Families (DCF) when physical and/or sexual abuse is suspected. Indications of physical abuse or neglect include but are not limited to the following: lethargy, excessively low energy levels, fear of physical contact, fear of authority figures, and frequent unexplained absences from school, unexplained and/or frequently occurring injuries (bruises, cuts, burns, and broken bones).

Indications of sexual abuse are less obvious but can include any of the above indications of physical abuse as well as indications of emotional disorders. In the case of either sexual or physical abuse a child may give verbal clues either in conversation with adults or peers or through play acting. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts defines "Day care and child care workers, including any person paid to care for, or work with, a child in any public or private facility ..." as *mandated reporters* and as such are required, by law, to make such a referral.

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN MAKING A REFERRAL

When a faculty member has reason to believe that a child should be referred to an outside agency, the following procedure shall be used:

Conference with Lead Teacher

Non-urgent situation:

If a faculty member has observed a child to be experiencing any of the conditions outlined above, or any other condition which would suggest that the child might need to be referred to an outside agency, the faculty member shall confer with that child's lead teacher. If the situation is clearly not urgent, this conference shall take place within three working days from the time that the faculty member requests it. It is the faculty member's legal responsibility to request such a conference as soon as he or she becomes aware of the possible need for it.

Urgent Situation:

If it appears that the child may be in immediate physical danger, the faculty member must report to the lead teacher and/or director and/or administrator immediately. If none of these is available, the faculty member must file a report with the Department of Children & Families and/or call the police, depending on the situation. During the conference with the lead teacher, the faculty member will report and present in writing his or her observations of the child which have led him/her to believe that there may be a need for referral. The lead teacher shall document these observations in the child's file. The lead teacher will then do one or more of the following, depending on the nature of the situation:

- a. File report with DCF or call police if, after assessing the situation, the lead teacher feels that the child is in immediate physical danger, he or she will file a report with DCF and call the police if there is danger of an unauthorized adult disappearing with a child.
- b. Observe the child and/or consult with other faculty. If the lead teacher assesses the situation and determines that it is not urgent, he or she will observe the child in the classroom for the next two or three days (or other appropriate period of time) to help determine the validity of the faculty person's observations. During this time the lead teacher may also decide to consult other faculty regarding their own observations of the child. All observations during this time will be documented in the child's file.
- c. Report back to person making initial observation. After observing child and consulting with other faculty, lead teacher will report back to the faculty person

who made the initial observations of the child. If the lead teacher cannot verify the faculty person's observations, he or she will explain why. If at that point, the faculty person still feels that the child needs a social services referral, he or she may request a conference with the director and/or administrator. If at a later date, the faculty person feels that the same issue needs to be addressed again, the lead teacher shall agree to repeat the observation procedure.

If the lead teacher has verified the faculty person's observations, he or she shall inform the faculty person of the course of action that will be taken by the school.

- d. Inform director and meet with parents. Once the lead teacher has determined that a child needs to be referred for outside services, he or she will inform the director of this. The lead teacher will document in the child's files that the director has been informed.

The lead teacher will then meet with the parents of the child, either in person or on the phone. Meeting in person is encouraged whenever possible. The lead teacher will explain the observations that have been made of the child and will refer the parents to the appropriate services. The content of this conference will be documented in the child's file.

In the case of suspected abuse or neglect, the lead teacher will, after assessing the situation and consulting with the director and/or administrator, determine whether it is in the child's best interests to inform the parents before filing a report with DCF. If the lead teacher and director determine that informing the parents might cause the child further harm, the lead teacher or director will file a report with DCF without informing the parents.

All referrals will be documented in writing in the child's file.

- e. Follow-up. The lead teacher is responsible for following up on any referrals he or she makes. In most cases this will involve a meeting or phone call with the parents of the child, to confirm that the recommended course of action has been taken. This shall also be documented in the child's file.



Health and Human Services Referral Listing

Fire, Police 911

Child at Risk Hotline

Emergency hotline to report suspected child neglect or abuse
800/792-5200

Parental Stress Hotline

800/632-8188

Poison Control Hotline

Human and veterinary poison information
617/232-2120

Human Services

Dept of Health and Human Services

Child Support: 617/ 565-2457
Family Asst.: 617/565-2440

Health Care for All

30 Winter Street
Boston, MA
Health care options for individuals and families.
617/350-7279

Buckle Up Hotline

Info and loan services for car seats
800 / 682-SAFE

Medical

Brookside Community Health Center

3297 Washington Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617/522-4700

Dimock Health Center

55 Dimock Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
617/442-9653

Children's Hospital Boston

300 Longwood Ave **Emergency Hotline**

Boston, MA 02115
617/355-6000
Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
640 Centre Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617/525-7225

Beth Israel Hospital

330 Brookline Ave
Boston, MA 02115
617/667-7000

Martha Eliot Health Center

75 Bickford Street,
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
General health and early intervention programs
Operated under auspices of Children's Hospital
Boston
617/973-5886

Therapy

Mental Health Services

Brookside Community Health Center
3297 Washington Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617/983-6047

Mass Mental Health Center

180 Morton Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617/626-9300

Screening

Children's Hospital Boston

Developmental Medicine Center
Screening for cognitive, physical disabilities
617/355-7971

Otolaryngology/Audiology

Brigham & Women's Hospital
75 Francis Street
Boston, MA 02115
617/732-5500

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

Our philosophy of discipline is based on the belief that discipline is a positive, internally motivated force. This force, when allowed to develop within a child, is one of the single most important means that child has towards making appropriate, peaceful, and healthful choices in his or her life, both now and in the future. Our discipline procedures are therefore designed to encourage and assist our children in developing their own internal discipline.

Faculty members are responsible for providing children with the choices, and information about those choices, that are available to them, both in general and in specific situations. Faculty members are also responsible for creating an environment and a relationship with the children that provide consistency, firmness, love, and clearly stated limits. The consistency and the clearly stated limits provide the information the child needs to make appropriate choices. The love and the firmness provide safety for making those choices.

Our assumption is that in most cases when a child is acting inappropriately, he or she either does not know of an appropriate alternative or is crying out for attention. In the first case, a faculty member can offer information, i.e. give the child choices for appropriate alternatives and, if useful, explain to the child why these choices are more helpful or appropriate.

In the case of a child asking for attention through inappropriate behavior, the faculty member should acknowledge the child's need and try to meet it without rewarding the child for the inappropriate behavior. Offering alternatives (redirecting) and/or giving verbal explanations, making a clear distinction between the child and the action best does this. ("I didn't like it when you pushed Jimmy. Pushing is not okay here.") Then, if possible, the faculty person should try to help the child articulate the feelings motivating the behavior. ("Are you feeling mad at somebody?") In addition, if possible, the faculty person should take some time to give the child attention while he or she continues to express feelings.

For very young children, redirection and very simple language are used. For instance, a young toddler who is biting or hitting another child will be gently removed from the situation and offered a toy that will engage his or her interest. The intervening faculty member will decide if spoken language is useful or helpful at that point. A simple, firm but quiet "No" will usually suffice.

Two year olds begin to use inappropriate behavior to communicate their need for adult attention. When a faculty member understands that this is happening, he or she will follow the same procedure as is used for the older children. He or she may simply say, "I'm sorry, but you may not take that toy from Sarah," and offer the child a different toy. Then, if possible stay at the child's side and if the child seems ready or able to articulate his or her feelings, the faculty person should encourage the child to do so in an appropriate manner. This helps the child to understand the importance of expressing feelings and also gives the child adult attention in a loving but non-rewarding way.

For the older children we may have to call them to the side to provide them time to cool down and center. In situations where a child is repeating an unacceptable behavior over and over, we will remove him or her from the situation and, through talking, determine what is the cause and problem-solve to resolve the situation.

The following is not considered acceptable adult behavior when disciplining a child. If a faculty person repeats the behavior frequently, the director or other faculty members will work with the person to help him or her find more positive ways of interacting with children.

- Yelling, screaming, or using threatening tones of voice are prohibited.
- Physical force of any kind is not acceptable under any circumstances except when a child needs to be lifted up or otherwise removed from an uncontrollable situation (when a child is putting himself or herself in immediate danger or hurting or about to hurt another child or adult). Unacceptable physical force includes spanking, slapping, shaking, hitting, pinching, squeezing, picking up a child and setting him down forcefully. Whenever possible, a faculty member should not touch a child if he or she is feeling angry with the child. Whoever is disciplining a child should first make every effort to be in control of his or her own feelings. This leads to more effective and positive discipline and helps to prevent unintended use of physical force.
- "Bargaining" is not an acceptable form of discipline, e.g., "If you do this, I'll do that."
- Smacking, humiliation, and denial of food are forbidden.

PROGRAM PLAN FOR FOREST HILLS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

I. Preschool Class Schedule

- **ARRIVALS**
Parents drop children off no later than 9:00. During this time children might play indoors in our gym, outdoors in the playground, or work in the classroom with Montessori materials. Supervising teachers and assistants greet children and parents as they arrive and take note of any special information or requests regarding individual children.
- **CIRCLE/COMMUNITY MEETING**
This is a structured group time when all children and teachers come together at circle. We take attendance, do calendar, and any of the following: songs, dance and movement, show-and-tell, reading stories, discussion of past, current or future events, issues and concerns, introduction of new materials, and foreign language activities.
- **WORK PERIOD**
Children choose individual work from any of the following curriculum areas: language, math, sensorial, practical life/everyday living, art (in the art room) and science. Teachers observe children, record their observations, and work with the children both individually and in small groups. The environment and the materials are designed to promote and cultivate self-image, self-esteem, independence, sense of order, and grace and courtesy. They teach specific skills in large and small motor movements, speech and language, familiarity and fluency with the numerical and decimal systems, and arithmetic. They aid

the development of visual, aural, tactile and neuromuscular discrimination and appreciation, creativity through visual arts, respect and appreciation for both the natural and indoor environments, and appreciation and curiosity about different cultures. The tone of the work period is one of focused and energetic industry, encouraging and nurturing the child's natural love of learning. During work period snack is provided. At the end of work period children and teachers regroup, share what the children did during work time, plan outdoor time, and sing a few songs. This time is used to prepare to go outside (putting on outdoor clothing during cold weather, sunscreen during the summer, and using the bathroom).

- **OUTDOOR PLAY:**

Children most often play in the Tot Lot playground near the school located at the corner of Stedman St. and Rossmore Road or they may walk to any one of the neighboring playgrounds along the Southwest Corridor. Children develop an appreciation for nature and the outdoors and develop their large motor skills as they swing, slide, climb, run and play organized outdoor games. In inclement weather the children use our gym for gross motor activities.

- **LUNCH**

Children and teachers eat lunch together (children bring lunch from home). During lunch teachers read stories or sing with the children as they finish eating. Then, children prepare for naps (using bathroom, putting out mats and blankets, and listening to quiet music).

- **REST PERIOD**

Many children use our gym for nap, some use the classrooms. All children are required to rest.

- **LATE AFTERNOON ACTIVITY AND DISMISSALS**

During this time many parents begin to pick up their children. Activities planned for this time are therefore flexible enough to allow for children leaving for the day. Such activities may include any of the following and may or may not require that the children be separated into different age groups: arts and crafts, dance and movement, foreign language activities, outdoor play, indoor free play, group games. Afternoon snack is offered at this time.

***These times are approximate and depend on the children's needs and desires.**

Nurturing time is throughout the day.

II. Toddler Class Schedule

- **ARRIVALS, SNACK, and WORK PERIOD**

Parents drop off children no later than 9:00. During this time children work in the classroom with Montessori materials. The supervising teacher greets children and parents as they arrive and takes note of any special information or requests regarding individual children. Children choose morning snack individually and it is available until 10:00. Toddlers wash their hands, take their own bowls and fill them with fruit and crackers, sit at tables and eat.

- **DIAPERING AND TOILETING (as needed)**

- **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Children play at the Rossmore Playground.

- **INDIVIDUAL WORK PERIOD** Children choose activities from the shelves or from designated activity areas. Shelf activities include puzzles, blocks, large motor manipulatives, small motor manipulatives, everyday living and sensorial activities, drawing and painting, clay, and educational materials which introduce counting, the alphabet, and colors.

Teachers observe the children and record their observations, and work with the children both individually and in small groups. The environment is designed to cultivate positive self-image, self-esteem, independence, and sense of order. It aids the acquisition of specific skills including large and small motor movements, speech and language development, development of visual, aural, tactile and neuromuscular discrimination and appreciation, creativity, and respect and appreciation for both the natural and indoor environments. Special emphasis is placed on socialization skills which the adults provide as they interact with the children and act as role models.

- **CIRCLE**

This is a structured group time when all children and teachers come together at circle. We take attendance and talk about the weather using visual aids and manipulatives.

Additionally we do any of the following, with special emphasis on social interaction and developing attention span: songs, dance and movement, discussion, introduction of new materials, reading stories.

- **LUNCH, CLEAN UP, AND DIAPERING**

Teachers give special attention to helping the toddlers develop eating skills such as pouring, drinking, using forks and spoons, opening and closing lunch boxes, etc. Diapers are changed as needed.

- **NAPS**

Teachers help the toddlers put out mats and blankets and while they are settling down, the teachers may rub their backs. Quiet relaxing music is played as the children fall asleep. Quiet activities are provided for children who do not nap.

- **DIAPERING, BATHROOM, CLEAN UP, AND SNACK**

After nap, diapers are changed as needed. Parents may begin picking their children up at this time as well, so from this point on, activities are planned which will accommodate children leaving without creating disruptions.

- **OUTDOOR PLAY**

- **WORK PERIOD or ART ACTIVITIES**

The afternoon work period is more limited than in the morning; only some activities are used, rather than having all activities available. This is to help focus the children and wind them down for the end of the day, and also to allow faculty to interact more individually with the children, who by this time of day may be more emotionally needy than in the morning. Diapers are changed as needed.

Teachers transition the children from one activity to another by using music, or verbal cues such as, "When you are done with that activity you can wash your hands for snack or when this song is done we will be having circle" Teachers also use musical instruments, or sing a song to let the children know that it is time to transition to another activity.

***These times are approximate and depend on the children's needs and desires.**

Nurturing time is throughout the day.

LEAD POISONING

What is lead poisoning?

Through hand and mouth activity (such as teething or thumb sucking) children may accidentally poison themselves with lead if it is available from the ages of birth to six years old.

What are the possible sources of lead in a child's environment?

The most common is lead-based paint. Other sources include improper glazing of ceramics, window putty, soft metal objects, lead toys, fishing weights, solder, paper printed with red, yellow and orange inks, lead jewelry, oil colors which may contain lead chromate, and matches containing lead acetate.

How can you tell if a child has lead poisoning?

Usually a child shows no symptoms until the lead build-up is quite great, but the early symptoms may be poor appetite, stomach aches, vomiting, constipation, bedwetting, headaches, paleness, hyperactivity or a complete change of personality such as crankiness. The only way to know is to have your child's blood tested.

What can parents do?

1. Have yearly blood tests done for children from the ages of one to six. This is a simple test requiring only a few drops of blood from the fingertip.
2. Have your home and play yard inspected for lead chips.
3. For more information, before you remove lead paint from walls and woodwork, please call: **CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM at the toll-free number: 1-800-532-9571**

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

- 1) Confidentiality and Distribution of Records, Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. FHMS will not distribute nor release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without the written consent of the child's parent(s). We will notify the parent(s) if a child's record is subpoenaed and the court allows.

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 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 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.

- 2) Charge for Copies. The licensee shall not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.
- 3) Amending the Child's Record.
 - a) A child's parent(s) shall have the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant materials to the child's record;
 - b) A child's parent(s) shall have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such request shall be made in accordance with the procedures described below:
 1. if such parent(s) is of the opinion that adding such information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record, he shall have the right to have a conference with the licensee to make his objections known;
 2. The licensee shall, within one week after the conference, render to such parent(s) a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the

decision. If his decision is in favor of the parent(s), he shall immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

- 4) Availability of Information to the Office. Notwithstanding 102CMR 7.05(19), upon request of an employee, authorized by the Commissioner and involved in the regulatory process, the licensee shall make available to the Office any information required to be kept and maintained under these regulations and any other information reasonably related to the requirements of these regulations. Authorized employees of the Office shall not remove identifying case material from the center's premises and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

SUGGESTED LUNCHES

When preparing a lunch for your child to bring to school, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Pack foods that will not easily spill and that are easy for your child to eat with a minimum of adult assistance. Pre-peel and pre-cut foods as needed.
- Serve a variety of foods but always be sure to pack at least one “favorite” food. Do not pack more than one “new” food at a time.
- Avoid processed foods which contain unhealthy amounts of salt, sugar, and artificially derived additives.
- Please do not pack candy or gum. FHMS does not permit children to eat these while they are in the school.

Listed below are suggestions for foods to include in your child’s lunch.

- Sandwiches made from whole grain breads and:
 - butters, jams or jellies
 - cheese
 - tofu spread
 - tuna fish
- Beverages:
 - milk
 - soymilk
- Raw vegetables, (carrots, peppers, cucumbers, broccoli, zucchini), cut, sliced or cubed.
- Fresh fruits, (apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, pears, pineapple, cherries, blueberries, strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew) served whole or sliced.
- Cheese: sliced or cubed (unprocessed cheese; not “cheese food”).
- Finger food:
 - nuts, pretzels, raisins, other dried fruits, dry cereal (cheerios, puffed rice, puffed wheat, etc.), popcorn.
- Desserts:
 - unsweetened granola bars
 - fruit leathers
 - cookies sweetened with fruit juices
 - yogurt (avoid the highly sugared brands)
 - muffins

Suggestion for wrapping food: For both environmental and economic reasons, use waxed paper and reusable plastic containers to keep your child’s lunch fresh.

PLANS FOR TRANSITIONS

Transition Schedule for all new children who are starting in the Toddler Classroom

Students are to arrive at 9:00 AM during the Transition Week.

First day: Student stays with the parent in the classroom from 9–10:00 AM

Second day: 9–10:30 AM, student stays one hour with parent and a half hour without.

Third day: Student stays from 9–10:30 AM, half hour with parent and one hour without.

Fourth day: Student stays all morning including lunch.

Fifth day: Student stays till after nap. Dismissal is at 3:00 PM.

PLAN FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES

Any non-English-speaking parents who want to enroll their child in FHMS must have a translator available whenever we need to communicate with them. At the current time we do have staff fluent in Spanish and French.

EVACUATION/EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLAN

A. EMERGENCY PLAN FOR EVACUATION OF THE CENTER:

- Separate evacuation plans posted for each classroom area?
- Toddler teachers lead toddlers out of the building; preschool teachers lead preschoolers out of the building.
- A designated teacher and the director check for stragglers.
- The designated teacher checks the number of children evacuated against the attendance sheet.
- There will be one fire drill every other month on a day that is reasonably warm and dry; children are prepared for all drills.

B. EVACUATION PROCEDURES:

Toddlers and preschoolers are evacuated by having the Assistant Teachers take the attendance book and lead children out the exit door; the Lead Teachers check the bathrooms, cubbies, and closets and leads any stragglers out the door.

The director is responsible for assuring evacuation drills are practiced and for documenting the practices.

I. Preparation of the School Facility

a. Hazard Assessment

- i. Every year, the Director or staff will conduct a thorough survey of non-structural hazards using hazard assessment work sheets.
- ii. Hazards will be removed in so far as practical.
- iii. The Director will coordinate the necessary follow-up to the survey.

b. Emergency First Aid Supplies

- i. Emergency supplies will be contained in a portable container placed in a specific area.
- ii. A list of supplies and equipment, map, and other emergency instructions will be available at Forest Hills Montessori School.

c. General Information (located in several designated locations)

- i. Instructions and locations for shut-off valves for gas, hot water, and electricity.
- ii. Number and location of fire extinguishers.
- iii. Emergency telephone numbers for city disaster reporting agencies (including police and fire departments, hospitals, Red Cross, and utility companies).
- iv. Listing of contents and locations of all first aid supplies.
- v. Call letters and dial locations of radio stations broadcasting local disaster information, including numbers to contact.
- vi. Duplicate copies of parent release form both in portable first aid kit, as well as field trip backpack.
- vii. Listing of special medications for children and staff.
- viii. A list of satellite locations and authorization forms for each child.

II. Preparation of the Children

a. Drills

- i. Teachers should conduct periodic evacuation drills.

III. Preparation of the Director and Staff

a. The Director shall:

- i. Be knowledgeable about responsibilities for emergency preparedness.

- ii. Appoint a second-in-command to assume the Director's responsibilities when the director is not on the premises.
- iii. Require that all teachers hold current first aid and CPR certifications.
- iv. Require all staff to annually review emergency preparedness and disaster procedures.
- v. See that the school carries out at least two drills per year.
- vi. Take an annual inventory of First Aid supplies to assure all items are included and have current expiration dates.
- vii. Review the disaster preparedness plan.
- viii. Keep parents informed of policies and plans relating to emergencies.

b. The teachers shall:

- i. Be knowledgeable about all procedures following a disaster, the location and contents of the emergency supplies and parents' responsibilities in event of a disaster.
- ii. Conduct meaningful drills at least twice a year.
- iii. Take and maintain first aid training and CPR as provided for by the school.

IV. Preparation of Parents and Day Care Center Community at Large

- a. Parents are required to make themselves acquainted with the school's Emergency Plan. The Emergency Plan can be found on pages 23-25 of this handbook.
- b. Encourage parents to take First Aid and CPR training.
- c. All parents shall immediately report to Forest Hills Montessori School following a major disaster or other emergency to assist teachers and to take their own child home and other children who are authorized to leave with them. Teachers are to remain on site until all children are released to an authorized adult or satellite home.

PARENT & VISITOR CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct for parents and visitors ensures that everyone who visits Forest Hills Montessori School is able to do so in a safe and harmonious manner. The values of respect and positive relationships are paramount in our School and this Code of Conduct supports those values.

Parents and visitors to the School are to:

- Treat all persons associated with the school with respect and courtesy.
- Make a prior appointment with a staff member if you wish to discuss a matter in detail.
- Only enter a classroom on invitation from the teacher.
- Allow staff to supervise, investigate and manage students without interference.
- Use polite language in the presence of students, staff or other visitors.
- Discuss issues or concerns about the school, staff or students by talking directly with the Head of School or class teacher at an appropriate time.
- Behave at all times in a manner that does not cause alarm or concern.
- Follow school procedures governing entry and behavior on school grounds, including any restrictions that may be imposed.

Disregarding this Code of Conduct may result in restricted access to the School grounds.

HEAD LICE POLICY

Pre-school children and their parents face many new challenges as they begin their first experience in a group setting. One of these challenges is the risk of children contracting head lice and the use of ineffective and potentially harmful chemical treatments. Head lice are a common occurrence among young children who are most vulnerable to the dangers associated with the misuse and abuse of head lice treatments – the majority of which are pesticides. For this reason, FHM has developed the following Head Lice (Pediculosis) Policy in consultation with the School Nurse. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to managing head lice within the school community.

Roles & Responsibilities

Parent/Carer responsibilities are to:

- Learn about head lice management by reading the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet;
- Regularly check their child's hair for head lice;
- Treat their child's hair immediately if the child has head lice
- Inform the school and other close contacts if their child has head lice, to confirm that treatment of their child's hair has commenced; and
- Be aware of and follow the school's Head Lice Policy.

The School's responsibility is to:

- Develop, implement and maintain a Head Lice Management Policy
- Ensure that Parents and Staff are aware of the school's Head Lice Policy
- Keep up to date with the latest Head Lice information and management strategies
- Provide information, advice and education to parents and the school community about Head Lice management when requested

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE?

The School undertakes the following steps to ensure that a clearly defined, confidential process is followed when a child is found to have head lice.

Day 1:

- Students are given a brief, age-appropriate explanation about head lice.
- An email to parents of a child found to have head lice and how to check hair effectively for head lice is sent from the school office.
- The email informs the parents that their child has head lice and advises them that, as required by the school policy, the child must commence Head Lice treatment and be cleared by a medical professional before returning to school.
- Parents of the other students will receive an information email on how to check hair effectively for head lice on the same day, asking them to check their child's hair for head lice and advising them how to do this effectively.
- As a courtesy, out of town families will receive a phone call well before the child goes home.

Day 2:

- Once treatment has commenced, the parents of the child with head lice should send the child back to school with a letter from the child's doctor clearing them of lice and nits. Parents are reminded that treatment must be completed over the 10-day period, as recommended by the Department of Health.
- If the Parents of a Child Found to have head lice has been informed of the presence of lice but no treatment has started, then the parents are asked if they are experiencing any difficulty. If the parents have no particular difficulty, then they are reminded of their responsibility to the child and to the school community. The parents are advised that the child must not return to school until treatment has begun. Parents must email the school, or phone the Office to confirm treatment has begun.

Students may not return to school without a letter from their pediatrician or nurse stating that the child is lice and nit free.

ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:

- Students with long hair must wear it tied back, braided and/or pinned.
- Students are to be discouraged from sharing hairbrushes and combs.
- Students do not share sleep mats, blankets, or sheet. Sheets and blankets are kept in a closed nylon bag in the child's cubby. Coats are hung on hangers and hats are tucked inside the sleeve.

EXCLUSION OF A STUDENT FROM SCHOOL

Under the School Education Act 1999, students found to have head lice may be excluded from school until treatment has begun and all live head lice and nits are removed

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING

By signing below I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the contents of Forest Hills Montessori School's Parent Handbook.

Parent 1 Signature

Date

Parent 2 Signature

Date