



## RIVENDELL SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

This Handbook will be a useful reference guide for you while your child is a student at Rivendell Preschool. Be sure to let us know if you want to talk about any of our policies or if you have questions that are beyond the scope of the Handbook. Ongoing, open communication is the basis of our partnership on behalf of your children.

With best wishes for a wonderful school year,

Katy Hill  
Executive Director



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## MISSION STATEMENT

**Rivendell School**, founded in 1995, administers a uniquely comprehensive range of early childhood services from progressive Montessori education to leading edge early intervention programs for children with special needs. Our goal is to promote excellent early childhood education in a wide variety of inclusive programs. We are a New York State approved not-for-profit organization and hold an Absolute Charter from the New York State Board of Regents.

We are deeply committed to providing coordinated and individualized support to the families that we serve. When a child has been identified with special needs, our service providers collaborate closely with each other, parents, classroom teachers, and school administrators to tailor services to that child's needs and abilities. As an educational service, we actively share our collective knowledge with other educators and professional colleagues in the community to help formulate and shape best practices in early childhood education. That breadth of experience allows Rivendell to approach each child holistically, integrating academic learning with the development of positive social relationships and a genuine sense of belonging.

**Rivendell Preschool**, a pre-primary Montessori school, opened in September 1977 in a Park Slope brownstone with twenty-five students and was called The Children's House of Park Slope. In 1998, it became part of Rivendell School as its model inclusion setting. Rivendell Preschool is an Associate Member of The American Montessori Society. Rivendell Preschool teachers and administrators believe that learning to get along with a wide range of people and accepting and respecting their differences has lasting benefits for everyone. This approach shapes our firm commitment to each other and to Montessori education. Our preschool classrooms typically include children with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Students discover materials especially designed for their levels of readiness and maturity in a warm, creative atmosphere. Our Montessori teachers, along with the special education itinerant teachers and therapists who help children with identified special needs, provide a rich, inclusive community for all the children, for each other, and for parents. The Preschool supports overall development and school readiness for preschoolers on the autistic spectrum through Rivendell's CORE Program, an intensive, relationship-based approach to

special education itinerant teaching. Growing Connections, our horticultural-literacy program, fosters an understanding of science concepts and encourages children to embrace stewardship of our world.

## **THE RIVENDELL SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Rivendell School Board of Trustees oversees our Preschool program as well as our evaluation and special education services. Our Executive Director meets with the Board quarterly. The President of Rivendell's Board of Trustees can be reached at [boardoftrustees@rivendellnyc.org](mailto:boardoftrustees@rivendellnyc.org).

## **LICENSING**

Rivendell Preschool is licensed by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Our permit and our most recent inspection report are posted in the school's reception area on the first floor. Our most recent inspection report is also available on the Health Department website or by calling 311.

Our Safety Plan, Emergency and Critical Incident Response and Lost Child Protocol are approved by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene/Bureau for Child Care and are available for parents to view in the Preschool Office.

## **POLICY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, national origin or the sexual orientation of the parents. Our goal is to serve the economic and cultural diversity that is reflected in our Brooklyn community.

## **ADMISSIONS**

Current students, siblings of current students, and siblings of alums who spent at least two years with us have admissions priority. Sibling applications are due by November 15.

## **LOCATION**

Rivendell School is located at 277 Third Avenue, between Carroll and President Streets. Our building comprises three floors, plus a basement and rooftop play area.

### **First floor**

Reception/waiting area

Administrative Assistant's office

Executive Director & Admissions Coordinator/Preschool Administrator's office

Classroom Four  
Outside Greenhouse, backyard garden and stroller parking

### **Second Floor**

Assistant Executive Director's office  
Classrooms Two and Three

### **Third Floor**

Accountant's Office  
Evaluations & Services Office  
Classroom One  
OT/PT Gym

Our basement houses our building custodian's workroom, a staff kitchen, a conference room, therapy rooms, staff workstations and Children's Library. There are bathrooms on every floor.

## **SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**

### **Phone number, fax number, and email**

**The school phone number** is 718-499-5667. This line is answered by voice mail before 8:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. During school hours the phone will always be answered by a staff member, not a recording. Our **fax number** is 718-499-7269. Please let us know if you need to fax a written document to us and to whom it should be directed.

### **Email addresses**

Executive Director	Katy Hill <a href="mailto:katy.hill@rivendellnyc.org">katy.hill@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Admissions Coordinator Preschool Administrator	Shelly Wolf Scott <a href="mailto:shelly.wolf.scott@rivendellnyc.org">shelly.wolf.scott@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Administrative Assistant	Jessica Taylor <a href="mailto:jessica.taylor@rivendellnyc.org">jessica.taylor@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Classroom One	<a href="mailto:classroom.one@rivendellnyc.org">classroom.one@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Classroom Two	<a href="mailto:classroom.two@rivendellnyc.org">classroom.two@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Classroom Three	<a href="mailto:classroom.three@rivendellnyc.org">classroom.three@rivendellnyc.org</a>
Classroom Four	<a href="mailto:classroom.four@rivendellnyc.org">classroom.four@rivendellnyc.org</a>

### Please telephone the office

- To let us know your child will be absent
- To ask a staff member to call you
- **To convey a change of dismissal arrangements for that day. IT IS CRUCIAL THAT WE SPEAK WITH YOU IN PERSON OR BY TELEPHONE SO THAT YOU ARE ASSURED WE KNOW OF THE CHANGE.**

### Please telephone Shelly or email her at [shelly.wolf.scott@rivendellnyc.org](mailto:shelly.wolf.scott@rivendellnyc.org)

- To inform us about someone who may be interested in the school
- With a question about children's schedules
- With a question about tuition or tuition payments
- With a question about medical forms or to make an Individual Health Care Plan for a child with special health needs

### Please telephone Katy or email her at [katy.hill@rivendellnyc.org](mailto:katy.hill@rivendellnyc.org)

- To check on a child who was upset when you left him/her at school; we will check with the teachers or connect you directly with the classroom
- with a question about school curriculum
- with questions about child development
- with questions about recommendations or ex-missions

### Please email the classrooms

- To ask a teacher to call you
- To find out about snack schedules
- To convey non-critical information to teachers
- To ask a general question about the classroom

Classroom mailboxes will be checked at the end of every school day. **PLEASE DO NOT SEND PICK-UP/DISMISSAL INFORMATION TO THE CLASSROOM MAILBOXES.**

### Messages for Teachers

Arrival and dismissal times are not good times for lengthy conversation with the teachers who must devote their attention to welcoming the children or dismissing them safely. Please call the school office to leave a message for a teacher or to reach a teacher directly from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. or 3:15 – 4:00 p.m. We try to return calls within twenty-four hours.

### Message Board

There is a message board in the reception area AND at the door to each classroom for parents to indicate a pick-up plan that is different from the usual plan. Please write your child's pick-up plan on both boards.

### **School Announcements**

Reminders of school events are sent home a few days before the event, electronically and/or manually. It is important that we have your current email address so that you receive messages in a timely way.

### **Parent Handbook, Preschool Calendar and School Directories**

The Parent Handbook and Preschool Calendar are published on our website. Please go to <http://www.rivendellnyc.org/parents-handbook.html> and <http://www.rivendellnyc.org/preschool-calendar.html> for the most up-to-date information. Classroom and school-wide directories are sent to all families via a Dropbox link and will be updated as necessary.

### **The Rivendell Reader**

The Rivendell Reader is published annually by Rivendell School. Articles about and by Rivendell Preschool children, parents and staff are highlighted in the Reader along with stories about other schools that partner with Rivendell School to provide inclusive early childhood education.

### **Tuition**

The school cannot function without prompt tuition payment. Details of payment plans are outlined in the Enrollment Contract. If there is any increase in your child's time at school, tuition will be revised accordingly and must be paid directly to the school before the child can begin additional hours.

Tuition payments must be up-to-date before your child begins school in September. The school reserves the right to cancel the Enrollment Contract if payment is more than sixty days in arrears. See the Enrollment Contract for late fees and returned check fees.

## **PARENT TEACHER COLLABORATION**

### **Team Teaching Approach**

Rivendell Preschool is an inclusion school. Each class is taught by a team of teachers, which meets regularly to discuss classroom dynamics and curriculum as well as the needs of each child in our classroom communities. This team is comprised of general education teachers and, where appropriate, special education itinerant teachers (SEITs). The primary goal of a SEIT is to support a child with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), to help him/her function happily at school and to take advantage of all that is offered in the classroom. Related service providers, including occupational, physical, speech and play therapists are also part of classroom life when an IEP mandates those services for a child. Services are typically delivered individually as well as in partnership with one or more classmates. These sessions are an enjoyable learning experience and, while classmates are under no obligation to participate, they often ask to be invited. The sessions can take place in the classroom as well as in our therapy rooms or the gym.



Itinerant teachers also work directly with the classroom teachers. They collaborate on ways the curriculum can be enhanced or adjusted to meet the needs of individuals within the group. Together, they create a richer environment for all the children.

### **Partnership with Parents**

Parents' participation in school life is very important. The teachers need your insights and intimate knowledge of your child so that they can provide maximum care and support. A meeting or phone conversation with the teachers can be arranged any time you have concerns or questions that you want to discuss. Generally you can speak directly to a teacher from 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. or from 3:15 – 4:00 p.m. Please let us know via note or phone call of any changes in your home situation that might affect your child. A visiting relative, change in caregiver, friend moving away, parent on a trip, death of a family friend, relative or pet, sleep disturbance or anything else that might affect your child are all things that are helpful for us to know about.

Rivendell families rely on our strict policy on confidentiality, which extends to photographs and videos. While we are delighted that parents enjoy documenting what they see during their visits to school, we feel strongly that photographs taken and videos made by parents when they visit are for their personal use only and should not be shared in any form, including social media.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

In late fall you will have an opportunity to meet with your child's teachers to share information and discuss his/her adjustment to the school year. Spring conferences provide an opportunity to discuss your child's growth and development over the course of the school year.

### **Conference Scheduling**

Reminders about conference dates are emailed to parents in the fall and spring. A sign-up sheet, posted on each classroom message board, allows you to choose from available times. Conference Notes, prepared by classroom teachers, are emailed to parents before their child's conference.

### **Choosing the Next School**

We encourage students to complete the Montessori cycle, staying at Rivendell School until they are ready for first grade. Our kindergarten program can be the culminating year for your child, bringing together all that has been experienced since entering school and offering the opportunity to be a teacher and role model for younger children.

We recognize that many factors drive parents' choices of schools for their children and that you may decide to move on before the kindergarten year. In such cases, our Executive Director can provide you with information about ongoing schools that will help guide your decisions and can meet with you to discuss ongoing school placements. Our annual spring PTA meeting, "After Rivendell: When, What, Where?" is a helpful way to begin thinking about ongoing schools.

### **Recommendations to Ongoing Schools**

When students apply to private ongoing schools, we provide written recommendations to the schools when requested by parents. Reports and recommendations can only be released if tuition payments are up-to-date.

Teacher recommendations are confidential, professional documents between schools. However, parents may, upon request, read their child's recommendation with the understanding that the ongoing schools will be informed that the parents have seen the report.

### **Parent Participation**

Parents are welcome to visit their child at school

- to celebrate birthdays
- share family traditions
- to work together, either in the classroom or on our rooftop play area.

Parents also provide healthy, daily snacks for the children on a rotating schedule. Speak to your child's teachers about the ways you can be involved in or contribute to classroom activities. We strongly encourage all Rivendell families to participate in our monthly food drive for Christian Help in Park Slope (C.H.I.P.S.), a neighborhood food pantry. From October to May Rivendell families contribute granola bars or drink boxes that children pack into decorated snack bags for our neighbors who use C.H.I.P.S. as a resource. Parent volunteers also deliver our contributions to C.H.I.P.S.

Siblings and caregivers are welcome to join us for school-wide events and activities such as the Holiday Potluck and Sing-along, Family Festivus!, and our year-end party at the Prospect Park Carousel.

### **Parent/Teacher Association**

The Parent/Teacher Association is a collaborative effort between parents and staff to ensure the best possible education for the children. Please consider volunteering to be our PTA chairperson or one of our Class Parent Liaisons. They help with scheduled events, fundraising efforts, such as our annual Rivendell Auction and classroom projects throughout the year. A fee of \$25 is required of each family at the beginning of each year and helps to cover costs of expenses for school-based PTA events. The association needs 100 percent support to be most effective.

## **SCHOOL SCHEDULE**

### **Separation and Phase-in**

Starting school (or returning to school) is an important step for your child, and we want to be as supportive as possible during this transition. All children experience separation from home and family in their own way. Some children express their feelings immediately and others wait until later in their school experience. It is important that parents and teachers express a positive, confident attitude about school. Getting together with other school families before school starts can also help your child to bridge his/her home and school life.

In September, when children begin school, they come in smaller groups for a shortened time period, which gradually increases to allow for a calm, peaceful beginning of the year. The overall phase-in period is at least one week and may be adapted to fit your child's individual needs.

Parents or caregivers of our youngest children may need to stay at school during the scheduled phase-in period, or longer if necessary. During phase-in we will tailor thoughtful separation plans for each child. As your child becomes more independent you will be able to sit aside in the classroom to read or move out to the hall, eventually saying "goodbye" when you and the teachers decide your child is ready.

Parents of older or returning students may be asked to take seats along the perimeter of the classroom or in the hallway, engaged with their own "work" such as reading a book or newspaper, while the child explores the environment. We will be on hand to make a plan with you to help you and your child as needed.

When the phase-in period is over parents or caregivers generally say good-bye at their child's respective classroom door. This is a ritual that children come to recognize and accept. When children have difficulty separating a quick goodbye with assurances that, "I'll see you later," can often make things easier.

If children cry, they will receive loving care from the teachers, an opportunity to express their feelings and assurance that "we understand your feelings; your mommy/daddy/caregiver will return; we'll take good care of you at school." Teachers and parents will talk together about plans that make sense for them and the children if the separation process is challenging.

Reluctance to leave home and come to school is a normal feeling for some children. Adjustment to transitions may be part of their separation process. Generally children are busy and content when they are at school, but if not, we will let you know. You are welcome to call the school to find out how things are going. The teachers will talk with you about your child's progress and will keep you apprised of his/her adjustment.

Sometimes it takes a while for your child to establish a feeling of trust in a new situation. And sometimes what looks like an easy beginning becomes challenging further down the road. Children may have renewed separation feelings after they've been sick, when a sibling is born, a parent is on a trip or working longer hours or if a new caregiver comes into the family circle. A child could even experience separation when he/she returns to school in the fall, whether to the same classroom or a new one. We understand and respect your child's needs and are here to support all aspects of the separation process whenever they occur.

### **Calendar Notes**

Our beautiful, dynamic Montessori environments require a great deal of teacher preparation and planning. Therefore, in addition to holidays we schedule staff work days during the year when school is closed so that teachers can plan curriculum, modify classroom materials, prepare for parent-teacher conferences and/or attend

professional conferences. All of these days are clearly noted on the Rivendell Preschool calendar. **It's very important to record holidays, school events and staff work days on your personal calendar.**

### **Snow Days and Severe Weather Conditions**

Rivendell School will be closed due to severe weather conditions **when the New York City Public Schools are closed.** To find out if the NYC schools are closed, listen to local television/radio broadcasts or check with the New York City Department of Education website at [schools.nyc.gov/](http://schools.nyc.gov/).

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

### **Promptness**

Please note your child's class session times and plan to be on time for school. It is often difficult for children to walk into a class in full swing and they may miss work or meeting time, which includes greetings, sharing news and new activities. In addition, late arrivals take teachers' attention from their work in progress with the class. Arriving on time is a good way to help your child develop lifelong habits of promptness. Please make lateness a rare occurrence.

Parents bring children to and pick them up from their respective classrooms, unless otherwise notified.

### **Arrival and Dismissal Times**

Earlybird Arrival	8:00 – 8:35
Morning Arrival Classrooms 1,2,3 and 4	8:45 – 9:00
Mid-day Dismissal, Classrooms 1,2,3, and 4	11:30 – 11:45
Extended Day Dismissal, Classrooms 3 and 4	2:45 – 3:00
Latebird Dismissal	3:00 – 4:00
P.M. Session Arrival, Classroom 2	12:45 – 1:00
P.M. Session Dismissal, Classroom 2	3:15 – 3:30

### **Earlybird**

This program offers an early arrival for the convenience of parents for a small fee. Earlybird is in session from 8:00 to 8:45 a.m., and you may use it every day or on an occasional drop-in basis. Children are under the care of a teacher and often bring their breakfast with them. Please plan to arrive by 8:35 a.m. for the Earlybird program.

### **Latebird**

Children may stay until 4:00 p.m. for an additional fee as part of our Latebird program. You may sign your child up for Latebird every day or as needed. PLEASE LET TEACHERS KNOW WHEN YOUR CHILD IS STAYING FOR LATE BIRD AND NOTE IT ON THE CLASSROOM MESSAGE BOARD. It can be surprising for a child to believe he/she is going home at the same time as other classmates and then to learn otherwise. Latebirds are under the care of a teacher and enjoy favorite classroom activities such as block building, art activities or Lego. Latebirds may also assist the teachers in organizing and preparing an activity for the next day.

Children typically attend Early and/or Latebird in their own classrooms, except on teacher meeting days when they join another group.

### **Picking Up Your Child From School On Time**

It is just as important to be on time when you pick up your child from school as it is to arrive promptly at the beginning of the session. Children may feel anxious when their pick-up person is late, or when lunchtime is under way for their peers and they cannot participate. Since teachers have many responsibilities that make it difficult to attend to a child who has not been picked up, children wait in the office until parents or caregivers arrive.

Please return the emergency/transportation form to the school at the beginning of the year so that we will know who is authorized to take your child home. Please inform us **IMMEDIATELY** of any changes. Use the message board in the school reception area and at your child's classroom to indicate with whom your child is going home unless it is you or your regular caregiver. **We cannot let your child go home with anyone other than you, your regular caregiver or the person indicated on the message board, unless we have been notified to do so in a written note, by email, or by phone from you. Your caregiver CANNOT authorize a change in pick-up. Call the school if you are changing a pick-up plan for your child on that day.** While this is primarily a safety precaution, it is often reassuring for children to be reminded with whom they are going after school, and a written message avoids possible confusion at dismissal time.

### **Where to Pick Up Children**

Classroom One students and Classroom Two PM students are dismissed from the roof when weather permits. All other students are dismissed from their classrooms. Please wait outside your child's classroom door. A teacher will let your child know that you are here.

### **Driving to School**

If you drive your child to school please note that there is a loading zone in front of the building, which can accommodate two cars for brief drop-offs or pick-ups only. PLEASE REQUEST A "DO NOT TICKET" SIGN FOR YOUR WINDSHIELD AND KEEP YOUR FLASHERS

ON WHILE YOU ARE ESCORTING YOUR CHILD TO HIS/HER CLASSROOM. A school administrator is usually on hand at arrival and dismissal time to be on the alert for traffic police, but we can't guarantee that you won't get a ticket or be towed!

### **Strollers**

**When possible, strollers should be folded and hung on the hooks provided for that purpose on the fence in the rear yard of the school.** Many children enjoy riding scooters or bikes to school as well. These can also be parked in the stroller area or hung on the fence. Please don't block the greenhouse or the gardening shelves! Strollers cannot be parked in the hallway as this constitutes a fire hazard. Please also respect our neighbors on Third Avenue and do not chain your stroller or bike to someone else's fence.

## **CHILDREN AND THEIR THINGS**

### **Clothing**

As your child works with the dressing frames in the Practical Life area and watches other children managing their own clothing, his/her skills and desire to be independent increase. It's important that all indoor and outdoor clothing be chosen with this goal in mind, and that you encourage independence at home. Please have your child dress in practical clothes that can be managed on her/his own in the bathroom and that do not in any way inhibit activity and getting messy. Pants with elastic waists are preferred until more difficult fasteners can be mastered. Overalls, suspenders and belts are suitable only if your child can fasten and unfasten them independently. It helps when outerwear has a loop at the neck so that your child can hang up his/her things on a coat hook. A thick elastic hair band works well for this purpose.

Shoes should be sturdy and fit well. Check shoelaces to see that they are long enough and have tips. Flip-flops and shoes without backs are not permitted because they are unsafe, especially for climbing stairs and roof play. Children may keep an extra pair of shoes in their tote bags to wear if they take their boots off at school on rainy days. Shoes must be worn in the classroom.

We ask that each child bring a spare set of clothing in a bag to be kept at school in case of either a bathroom accident or spill. Please label both the bag and the clothes with your child's name. When we send soiled clothing home, please send in a replacement the next day in a bag labeled with your child's name so that we can be sure it ends up in the right place. We make every effort to see that clothing does not get lost, and you can help by labeling all clothing with your child's name and attaching mittens to his/her coat sleeves. At the end of the school year all unlabeled belongings that are left unclaimed will be donated to charity.

### **Children's Possessions**

We recognize that young children may want to bring favorite objects from home to school and we know that transitional objects can help to connect a child's home/school

experiences. Help us to keep track of your child's possessions by labeling them and talk with your child's teachers if you have a question about the appropriateness of your child's special object.

### **School Possessions**

Please retrieve and return any school items that arrive home in your child's pockets after school. A simple "Let's take this back to school where it belongs so all the children can use it!" will usually convey the message in a matter-of-fact way.

## **CHILDREN'S WORK**

### **Process and Product**

The Montessori approach emphasizes process, the unfolding of the child's natural curiosity about his/her environment. While their early endeavors are extremely important for children's artistic and motor development, they don't always result in a tangible product. Young children are experimenting, often without concern for an end product or any preconceived notion of what they will create. When your child does produce art or written work some will be displayed at school, some will be sent home and some will be saved at school to be sent home in your child's portfolio at the end of the year.

### **Commenting on Your Child's Work**

As Montessorians we do not correct a child's work but are aware of where more practice is needed and offer assistance at a separate time so she/he doesn't feel criticized or discouraged. Children don't always want to talk about their work but when they do, we acknowledge their effort and encourage them to appreciate their own efforts, rather than looking to others for approval.

## **FOOD AND CELEBRATIONS**

### **Snacks and Food Preparation**

Healthy snacks, most provided by parents, are always available during the morning and afternoon work periods. Teachers post sign-up sheets outside each classroom so that parents can contribute on a rotating basis. The teachers will speak with you about good food choices for classroom snacks. In addition there are often individual and group food preparation activities available as part of the Practical Life curriculum such as cream cheese spreading, bread baking, and applesauce making.

Our school has a **NO-NUT/NO PEANUT/NO SESAME SEED POLICY**. Please do not send your child to school with peanuts, peanut butter, mixed nuts or sesame seeds for lunch or snack, including sesame-based hummus or tahini. Please let us know if your child has a special diet or food allergies. If necessary you can send in an allergen free snack selection at the beginning of each week that is labeled with your child's name.

We know that wholesome foods nourish and support the important work that children do at home and school. Planning and packing a nutritious lunch with your child on his/her

extended days is a good way to encourage good eating habits. We observe that many children don't eat large amounts of food at lunchtime in school, so sending small quantities of food that your child enjoys is a good idea. Please do not send candy as part of your child's lunch! Please leave lunch boxes, clearly labeled with your child's name and class, beneath the bulletin board in our reception area at drop-off in the morning where they are collected for refrigeration until mealtime.

The following is a list of nutritious foods that are popular with children.

- Sandwiches (cheese, tuna fish, cold cuts are a few favorites)
- Cheese and crackers
- Cheese sticks
- Raw vegetables and dip
- Fruit yogurts
- Applesauce
- Pasta (cold or kept warm in a thermos)
- Soup
- Cold pizza
- Bagel with butter or cream cheese
- Fruit, dried or fresh
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Cold-cuts, rolled up
- Cereal with milk

Please cut hot dogs and grapes in half lengthwise to prevent a choking hazard.

Children may only come for lunch/extended days on their scheduled days. Drop-ins are not permitted.

### **Birthday Celebrations at School**

We celebrate birthdays at school to acknowledge and honor the ways children grow and change over time and parents are invited to celebrate with their child's class. Please schedule the celebration date with teachers and ask them about the choice of special treat, keeping the dietary restrictions of classmates in mind. A photograph representing each year of your child's life that you can share with the class during the celebration helps tell his/her story in a special way.

### **Party Invitations and Holiday Cards**

Teachers may not distribute birthday party invitations, valentines or other holiday cards, but you or your child can deliver these to the cubbies as long as the entire class is included.

## **WALKS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

During the school year we take walking trips in and around our neighborhood. We must have a signed Release Form from you for your child to leave the school.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Health

It is important that your child come to school well rested and in good health. All children (with the exception of those recovering from physical injuries or surgery) must be able to participate in all activities, including outdoor time and movement time each day. Unless it is raining, we typically go to the roof for outdoor time every day. **A child who has had fever, diarrhea or vomiting within the past twenty-four hours may not come to school. Children must be fever-free without fever-reducing medication when they return. Even without fever, children who seem excessively cranky, fatigued, listless, are sneezing and/or coughing or have thick and heavily running mucus should also stay home. Please call us if you have questions about when your child should stay home from school.**

We will inform you if any children or staff have a serious, contagious condition as defined by the Department of Health so that you can monitor your child for symptoms of illness.

If your child is having surgery or any kind of medical procedure please speak with us so that together we can determine when she/he should return to school and resume normal activities.

### Medical Forms

The New York City Department of Health requires that all children have up-to-date medical forms on file, including a current immunization and screening record and lead test result before they begin school each fall. It is your responsibility to make sure that your form is completed correctly and that we receive it before school starts. **Children will not be admitted to school without a current and complete medical form on file.** Subsequent immunizations given during the year need to be documented by your child's health care provider on a new medical form and brought to school.

### Emergency and Pick-up Authorization

The Emergency and Pick-up Authorization tells us who may pick up your child from school and alerts us to allergies, medical conditions and food restrictions. **Your child may not start school without it.** Please make sure to speak with Shelly Wolf Scott, the School Administrator, to put any special medical plans in place. If your child has special health care needs we will develop a health care plan for him/her.

Please keep the school informed of your current work phone and mobile phone numbers and those of your emergency contacts. Be sure your emergency contacts know that they are designated on the form and how to get to the school.

### Medications

Sometimes children are ready to return to school after an illness but still require medication. Please consult with your pediatrician about scheduling dosages during times when your child will be at home. If your child must have medicine while he or she is at

school, we will arrange for you to come in and administer the required doses. The New York City Bureau of Child Care regulations expressly prohibit teachers from administering medication to children.

### **Injuries**

When the inevitable skinned knees, cuts or scrapes occur, teachers clean them with soap and water if the child will permit it and apply a bandage. An Incident Report is written, and parents or caregivers are informed at pickup time. If the injury is more serious, teachers or administrators will call parents to make a plan for the child's treatment.

### **Emergencies**

In the case of an extreme emergency we will call 911, your child will be taken to the nearest emergency room, and you will be notified immediately. A Head Teacher or School Administrator will remain with your child at all times.

### **Illness at School**

Should your child become ill at school, you will be notified so that you can pick her/him up. If you or your caregiver cannot be reached, your emergency contacts will be called. It is very important that all phone numbers are up-to-date.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice infestations are common and this is especially true in schools. Lice are highly communicable, but if parents get into the habit of checking children's heads regularly for lice and nits (eggs) these annoying parasites can be detected early and thus controlled. Please report any cases to the school immediately so that we can check all children and contain outbreaks. A child found to have lice must go home to be treated. We will recheck your child the next morning before school starts. Children cannot be in school if they have lice and/or nits, per the directive of the New York City Department of Health/Bureau of Child Care. This is the only way to prevent the spread of head lice. The school has a lice information packet with more details about detection, treatment and prevention, which will be sent to you as needed or at your request.

### **Using Teachers as Resources**

We encourage children to come to us any time they feel frightened or hurt either physically or emotionally. It's helpful for parents to encourage their children to talk with teachers about anything that may be bothering them at school. We will share your children's concerns with you and trust that you will do the same.

### **Toilet Training**

Children may begin school before they are toilet trained. When children show signs of readiness to practice using the toilet, teachers and parents work together to support their progress. At that time, we'll ask you to send in several sets of underpants, pants, socks and shoes. We will help your child to change his/her wet things for dry when the inevitable accident occurs.

## **DISCIPLINE**

### **Ground Rules**

The teachers' primary concern is with the safety and well being of the classroom community. To this end, clear and consistent ground rules are established to ensure the smooth functioning of the class. Children who are behaving in a disruptive manner are assisted by the teachers to follow directions, respect the rights of others and handle classroom materials appropriately. Teachers use language that is both clearly consistent and respectful of the child. They speak with a low, calm voice, and, when necessary, in a firm manner. At times children's freedom to move about the room or to participate in an activity is limited if they are misusing the privileges of that freedom. Unless safety is an issue, physical restraint is not used. Any difficulties children have following classroom ground rules are shared with you and strategies for successful limit setting both at home and at school will be developed and implemented.

We spend a great deal of time thinking about children as individuals as well as members of a classroom community, but we also know that they have already had experiences with all kinds of issues such as separation, independence, self-control, personal relationships, acceptance of limits and self-esteem. In addition, they bring to school their own unique temperaments. For the most part, children continue to work successfully on these important aspects of personal growth, but not always. Sometimes they need extra support and assistance. Once a child is in our school we feel a strong commitment to do everything in our power to assure that the child has a positive experience. If problems become apparent, we want to work with parents and outside professionals as a team in the best interest of the child. We want to give him/her all the support and attention we can, within the context of the demands of our busy Montessori classrooms.

### **When Do We Ask a Family to Leave the School?**

In the event that a child exhibits behavior that consistently interferes with his/her ability to participate successfully in classroom life, the following sequence of events occurs. First, teachers and the Executive Director will share their observations and concerns with parents and recommend strategies for home and school to help support the child. If the situation requires further intervention, a formal assessment may be recommended to evaluate what professional support, if any, is required to enable the child to remain at Rivendell School. Every effort will be made to adapt the environment to serve the child's needs. If those adaptations do not lead to the child's ability to have a successful experience, then a determination must be made as to whether Rivendell School is the right place for him/her. If it is decided that this is not the best environment, the school will work with the family to try to find a more suitable setting for the child.

## **YOUR CHILD AT HOME**

### **Independence**

Parents are often surprised and delighted to see and hear about the many things children do for themselves at school. A very important way that you can support your child at home is to provide opportunities for independence. Think of your child as a competent, capable,

enthusiastic, independent Montessori child! Offer responsibilities and privileges that reflect the respect you feel your child deserves and that are within his/her developmental capabilities. The ability to be independent and competent is constantly deepening. We are happy to share our ideas with you about encouraging children's independence at home. If we continually find the balance between not enough and too much independence, we can aid in the establishment of a growing sense of confidence and pride. "Look! I did it myself!" is a very exciting feeling for a young child. Together, we can help our children to be active, thinking, responsible individuals.

### **Television and Other Screens**

We strongly urge parents to consider carefully the role of television and digital media in children's lives and to set clear limits on usage. Children need to interact physically with their environment and to engage their minds actively. Time children spend at creative play and interacting with caring adults is essential for the developing brain.

### **Caregivers**

Those we hire to care for our children in our absence play a very important role in family life. Please take the time to communicate school procedures and other relevant information to caregivers. They are welcome to visit in the classroom. This is an important way for children to share aspects of their daily lives and gives caregivers an opportunity to learn about our approach to children.

### **Professionalism**

It is the school's policy that teachers or other staff members may not work for parents in their homes or offices. If you have any questions about this policy, please talk with the Executive Director.

### **Giving Gifts to Teachers/Staff Members**

Teachers and administrators may accept gifts only if they are made by the children. If adults wish to express their appreciation for staff members, they may do so by making contributions on their behalf to the Teachers' Continuing Education Fund or other designated Rivendell funds.