



2026-2027 RIVENDELL PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK



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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HISTORY AND MISSION

Rivendell School, founded in 1995, administers a uniquely comprehensive range of early childhood services ranging from progressive, inclusive 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.

Rivendell Preschool, our inclusive, pre-primary Montessori school, is licensed by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and is a member of the American Montessori Society. Opened in September 1977 in a Park Slope brownstone with twenty-five students, it was originally known as The Children's House of Park Slope. In 1998, it became part of Rivendell School as its model inclusion setting. Our preschool classrooms include children who are developing typically and those with special needs, all representing 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 and early childhood 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. At Rivendell School we 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.

Rivendell School celebrates and supports early childhood development while embracing what is different and what is the same in all of us in the classroom and in the community. 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, related service providers 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 the School to approach each child holistically, integrating academic learning with the development of positive social relationships and a genuine sense of belonging.

Through a partnership with the New York City Department of Education Committees on Preschool Special Education, our agency is approved by the New York State Education Department to conduct evaluations for preschoolers suspected of having special needs. We are also approved to provide special education itinerant teaching services (SEIT) for children mandated for this support service.

The Preschool also 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. Rivendell's Growing Connections Program, originally developed for homeless mothers and their preschoolers residing temporarily at a Tier II shelter before it was closed, is now based at the Preschool. This

horticultural-literacy program, designed by Rivendell staff, helps typically developing and preschoolers with special needs begin to learn scientific concepts and embrace stewardship of our world. Our Teacher Training and Resource Center rounds out the scope of Rivendell programming and supports the professional development of our own staff as well as those at other schools.

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.

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 review in the Preschool Office.

We follow the COVID-19 protocols recommended by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Rivendell School reserve the right to impose more stringent regulations than those of city, state or federal agencies.

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 have admissions priority.

LOCATION

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

First floor

Reception/waiting area

Receptionist/Administrative Assistant's offices

Executive Director & Admissions Coordinator/Preschool Administrator's offices

Classroom Four

Outside Greenhouse and backyard garden

Second Floor

Office of the Director of Special Education and Evaluation Services

Classrooms Two and Three

Third Floor

CORE Program Office and Model Classrooms

Classroom One

OT/PT Gym

Our basement houses a staff kitchen, a storage room, therapy rooms, SEIT workstations, Children's Library and mechanical rooms. There are bathrooms on every floor.

540 President Street

We have additional office space at this location for our Internal Accountant, our CPSE Evaluation Coordinator and Special Education Administrator

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**Phone Number and Email Addresses**

The school phone number is 718-499-5667. This line is answered by voice mail before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:30 p.m. During school hours the phone will always be answered by a staff member, not a recording.

Email addresses

Executive Director

Katy Hill (katy.hill@rivendellnyc.org)

Admissions Coordinator/
Preschool Administrator

So Lee (so.lee@rivendellnyc.org)

Receptionist/
Administrative Assistant

Jessica Taylor (jessica.taylor@rivendellnyc.org)

Classroom One

classroom.one@rivendellnyc.org

Classroom Two

classroom.two@rivendellnyc.org

Classroom Three

classroom.three@rivendellnyc.org

Classroom Four

classroom.four@rivendellnyc.org

Please telephone or email So Lee (so.lee@rivendellnyc.org)

- To let us know your child will be absent
- To convey a change of dismissal arrangements for that day. It is crucial that we communicate with you clearly so that you are assured we know of the change.

Please telephone or email So at so.lee@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 whether or not your child is well enough to attend school
- 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

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

Please email the classroom teachers

- To ask one of them to call you about a question or concern or to share family news
- To find out about snack schedules
- To convey non-critical information
- To ask a general question about the classroom

Teachers check their classroom email in the morning and at the end of every school day. Please do **not** send pick-up/dismissal messages to the classroom emails.

School Announcements

Reminders of school events are sent home electronically. 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 Brightwheel. Please go to your Brightwheel account for the most up-to-date information. Classroom directories are sent to all families with their child's individual phase-in schedule in the summer, and

classroom and school-wide directories will be available on Brightwheel, where they are updated as necessary.

The Rivendell Reader

The Rivendell Reader is published annually and marks the start of our annual fundraising campaign. Articles about and by Rivendell Preschool children, parents, staff and our programs 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 inclusive 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 early childhood and Montessori educators 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 them function meaningfully at school and to take advantage of all that is offered in the classroom. 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. 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, so each child gets to know the teachers and therapists who make up our teams.

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 family news, 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 email or phone call of any changes in your home situation that might affect your child. A special celebration or holiday, 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.

Confidentiality and Social Media

Rivendell families rely on our strict policy on confidentiality, which extends to photographs, videos and digital media. Your signature on the Rivendell Preschool Release Form gives us permission to post images of your child and share them with Preschool families for publicity purposes, to use as curriculum tools and to share with teachers and children at school via the Classroom Google photostreams.

Photos included in the class streams are for class use only and photos of children other than your own should not be shared in any form, including on social media platforms. The same is true of photos taken or videos made by parents during visits to school. Please only share photos of your child and not your child's classmates.

You may restrict the use of your child's image by so indicating on the Release Form.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

In the fall you will have an opportunity to talk with your child's teachers to share information and discuss their 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.

Reminders about conference dates are emailed to parents in the fall and spring and parents are invited to sign up for a convenient conference time with teachers.

Choosing the Next School

We encourage students to complete the Montessori cycle, staying at Rivendell School until they are ready for kindergarten. The Turning Five year can be the culminating one 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.

Recommendations to Ongoing Schools

When students apply to private ongoing schools, we provide 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 be part of their child's school day and are expected to follow our comprehensive health and safety protocols when they visit:

- To celebrate birthdays
- To share family traditions
- To work together, either in the classroom or on our rooftop play area.
- To provide healthy, daily snacks for the children on a rotating schedule.
- To participate in our community outreach projects. We'll keep you informed about these opportunities throughout the school year
- Siblings and caregivers are welcome to join us for school-wide events.

Speak to your child's teachers about the ways you can be involved in or contribute to classroom activities.

Parent/Teacher Association

The Parent/Teacher Association is a collaborative effort between parents and staff. Please consider volunteering to be a PTA Chairperson, a member of our Fundraising Committee or one of our Class Liaisons. The PTA helps with scheduled events, fundraising efforts and projects throughout the year. Each family contributes a modest membership fee at the beginning of each year that helps to support 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.

As children adjust to life at school, they will receive loving care from the teachers, an opportunity to express their feelings and receive assurance that teachers can help at school. Teachers and parents will talk together about plans that make sense for them and their 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 their 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. Children may even experience separation when they return 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 classrooms require a great deal of teacher preparation and planning. Therefore, in addition to holidays we schedule occasional staff workdays 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 these days are clearly noted on the Rivendell Preschool calendar. Special events, such as Grandparents and Special Friends' Day, are also included on the 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/.

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.

Arrival and Dismissal Times

Classrooms 1 and 4 (Early Bird begins at 8:00 am)	8:30 am
Mid-day Dismissal	11:30 am
Extended Day Dismissal	2:30 pm
Classrooms 2 and 3 (Early Bird begins at 8:00 or 8:30 am)	9:00 am
Mid-day Dismissal	12:00 pm
Extended Day Dismissal	3:00 pm

For All Classrooms

Late Bird Dismissal	4:00 pm
Later Bird Dismissal	5:30 pm

Early, Late and Later Bird

Children who come for Early Bird or stay for Late or Later Bird will spend that time in one of our classrooms. You can sign up for Early Bird, Late Bird and/or Later Bird for the year, or on a drop-in basis. If you are using the service only occasionally, please call or email Preschool Administrator So Lee, so.lee@rivendellnyc.org to let us know if your child is arriving early or staying late.

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.

Please return the Emergency and Pick-up Authorization form to the school at the beginning of the year so we know who is authorized to take your child home and inform us immediately of any changes. We cannot let your child go home with anyone other than you, your regular caregiver or a person made known to us in advance, unless we have been notified to do so in a written note, by email, or by phone from you. Caregivers cannot authorize a change in pick-up. Call So Lee, the Preschool Administrator, if you are changing a usual pick-up plan or adding someone to your list of approved persons. 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 clear message avoids possible confusion at dismissal time.

Driving to School

If you drive your child to school, please note that there is a No Standing School Days Area in front of the building, which can accommodate two cars for brief drop-offs or pick-ups only. We can give you a “PLEASE DO NOT TICKET ME” sign to put in your car while you are dropping your child at the door to the school. School administrators are 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

Stroller parking is limited to the space at either side of the school door. Stroller parking is at your own risk and locks are recommended. Stroller parking in our backyard space is not typically available so we can ensure plenty of room for the Growing Connections program.

CHILDREN AND THEIR THINGS

Clothing

As your child practices with buttons and zippers in the Practical Life area and watches other children managing their own clothing, their 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 comfortable, loose-fitting clothes that can be managed on their 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 coats and jackets have a loop at the neck so that your child can hang up their 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 recommended because they are unsafe for school, 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 seasonally appropriate 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 wet or 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 their 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 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 and non-judgmental way.

CHILDREN'S WORK

Process and Product

The Montessori approach emphasizes process, the unfolding of the child's natural curiosity about their 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 a 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 children's work but are aware of where more practice is needed and offer assistance at a separate time, so they don'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

Snacks are always available during the morning and afternoon work periods. In addition, there are often individual and group food preparation activities available as part of the Practical Life curriculum. Parents also contribute snacks on a rotating basis; the teachers will speak with you about what the class needs or would enjoy.

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 their 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! Lunchboxes should be clearly labeled with your child's name and class. Children place their lunchboxes in a cart in our reception area when they come into the school in the morning, and they are refrigerated until lunchtime.

Please let us know if you need some ideas about what to send in your child's lunchbox.

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 their story in a special way.

Holiday Cards and Other Messages

Children may distribute holiday cards, such as valentines, with a teacher's help, as long as their entire class is included. To avoid the accidental ingestion of an allergen, please DO NOT include edible treats with holiday cards or valentines.

WALKS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

As a childcare provider, we have an important role in helping children, staff, and families stay healthy. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene requires key practices that contribute to this goal, and they include a layered approach, the most effective way to keep the spread of illness, at bay.

By combining measures required by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, daily health screening upon arrival to school, good general hygiene, daily cleaning and disinfecting, testing and/or consultation with the child's pediatrician as indicated by symptoms that could signal a communicable illness and clear communication, Rivendell School will provide the necessary layers of protection for children, adults and families.

Health

It is important that your child come to school well-rested and in good health. All children (except for 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. These guidelines have been approved by the New York City Department of Health. Please call us if you have questions about when your child should stay home from school. We check children at the school and classroom doors every morning and will contact you if your child seems unwell during the school day.

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. Rivendell continues to be a mask-friendly environment. According to current guidance, masks will continue to be required for staff, parents, and visitors if they are recovering from COVID-19. Children recovering from COVID-19 will mask according to current protocol if able when cleared to return to school. Close contacts will follow current protocols for masking as able.

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

Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection

- Staff, children, and visitors practice healthy hand hygiene, washing hands often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Personal Protective Equipment in the form of masks, gloves, and work smocks will be provided to every staff member as needed.
- Our ventilation system is equipped with hospital-grade MERV-13 filters and is routinely sanitized.
- Each classroom is equipped with air purifiers.
- Rest sheets are stored in individual cubbies and washed weekly, either at home or school.
- All other classroom materials are sanitized daily according to the standard NYC Department of Health protocol that has always been in place.
- Teachers wear gloves when preparing, handling or helping children with food. Dishes, serving bowls, trays and utensils will be washed daily in our dishwasher.

Communication About Health and Safety

- Administrators will always inform staff, parents and guardians of any site-specific policy updates.
- Staff, children, and visitors will be reminded to stay home if sick or have recently tested positive for COVID-19 or other communicable illnesses. Current Department of Health protocols will be followed for return to school following illnesses.
- Staff, parents and guardians must inform school administrators if they or their children test positive for COVID-19 or any other communicable illness.

Our class curriculum will continue to reflect our understanding that children need to learn and practice sensible health and safety routines, and we know that you will also continue to instill that sense of awareness at home. We know that Rivendell families will do their part at home and outside of school to prevent the spread of illness.

As always, we encourage you to contact us by email or phone if you have any questions about our Health and Safety protocols.

Medical Forms

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 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. 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. Annual influenza vaccinations are now required by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for children up to five years of age.

Rivendell School expects all eligible children to be fully vaccinated, including against COVID-19.

Children will not be admitted to school without a current and complete medical form on file.

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 So Lee, the Preschool 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 them.

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 they are at school, we will arrange for you to come in and administer the required doses. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene expressly prohibits teachers from administering medication to children except for diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and EpiPen when necessary to prevent anaphylaxis, prescribed asthma inhalers in the event of respiratory distress, and over-the-counter preparations such as sunscreen or anti-itch creams or ointments, all with your permission.

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 by email or at pickup time, depending on the nature of the injury. 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 always remain with your child.

Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

Epinephrine auto-injectors are devices used to deliver emergency medication when children or adults have life-threatening allergic reactions. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene now requires that all childcare and preschool programs maintain two auto-injectors on site as a safety precaution in the event a child suddenly presents with serious allergic symptoms and does not have a prescribed auto-injector. Staff have been trained to prevent and respond to emergencies related to food allergies and to recognize signs of anaphylaxis.

Illness at School

Should your child become ill at school, you will be notified to pick them up. Reasons to go home from school may include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or seeming unwell enough that your child cannot participate in classroom activities. 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 in case we need to reach you or your approved contacts.

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. When a child is found to have head lice, parents will be called to take them 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 and Mental Hygiene. 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 Learning Protocol

Rivendell Preschool does not require that children be toilet trained for admission to its Preschool Program and recognizes that toilet learning is an integral part of any early childhood self-care curriculum. Classroom teaching staff, special education itinerant teachers and related service providers are committed to partnering with parents when their children are learning and practicing toileting skills at school. Our Montessori foundations underscore the basis for our positive approach to toilet learning and the importance of providing children autonomy through the process of mastery. Our staff will follow these protocols when helping children learning about toileting at school:

- Program staff will share and welcome information and feedback from parents about readiness for toilet learning
- A toilet learning plan will be developed collaboratively with parents and program staff.
- Progress will be shared regularly by program staff and parents
- Children will be supervised carefully in school bathrooms and provided with guidance as needed reflecting their current toileting skills
- Connected with their bathroom use, children will be taught effective handwashing skills
- Program staff will wear gloves when assisting children in school bathrooms, changing gloves and washing hands in between the children they assist

- Bathroom doors will always remain open to ensure safety and transparency
- Program staff will use accurate and developmentally appropriate language to label body parts and processes of elimination
- Program staff will help children clean their bodies and change clothes when needed, only touching their bodies when children do not yet have the skills to clean and/or change clothes on their own
- Parents will provide diapers and clothing as required and the school will provide diaper wipes and diaper bags

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 guided 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 them 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?

If a child exhibits behavior that consistently interferes with their 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

them. 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 their 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 participate in all aspects of school life. 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

The Rivendell Preschool PTA organizes giving gifts for teachers before the winter break and at the end of the school year.

Questions? Comments? 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.