



**Parent Handbook
Policies and Procedures**

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Welcome! We are excited to have your family join us at Village Montessori and Preparatory School! Our team is dedicated to working together for the good of our students and we are here as partners in your child’s development. We are fiercely committed to earning your trust, handling all matters with integrity and ensuring our little students are well cared for and learning. Thank you for choosing VMPS!

The VMPS Difference

Who We Are. Our leadership team leads with Christian values in our everyday interactions with children, staff and families. We are committed to partnership with parents, continuous improvement, and evolving with early education standards within the framework of the Montessori philosophy and Science of Reading approach. We aim to develop our team members as professionals in the early childhood education field as well as in our personal lives. Finally, we desire a family feel amongst our staff and student families. Because we have this family mindset, it enables our entire team to work together, at times assisting each other in different classrooms, to prepare children for their next classroom or grade level and most importantly, to develop in them a love for learning so that they become confident and respectful learners by the time they graduate from our programs.

We believe in preserving parental rights and invite parents to participate fully in their child’s learning and development. These include but are not limited to:

1. **Values:** We will introduce values and concepts rooted in scripture; we believe that there are some cultural issues that are best left to parents to introduce to their children
2. **Vaccinations:** We trust parents to make the best decisions for their child’s health and therefore allow medical and religious exemptions
3. **Viewpoints:** We honor and respect each family’s religious views, family structure, and any and all differences that make up the diversity of our student population and invite parents share these differences so long as they align with Christian beliefs
4. **Montessori:** The Montessori curriculum is unique in that it includes grace and courtesy, fostering independence, work cycle completion, promoting a neat and orderly environment, hands-on, concrete learning that strengthens the hand for writing and mixed age classrooms for leadership and followership development; there is no other early learning curriculum that exists today that develops the whole child better than the Montessori approach
5. **Science of Reading:** We have had the benefit of a forward-thinking literacy specialist on staff who implemented and trained teachers on Science of Reading materials, which are readily available for each teachers’ use in our primary classrooms; our dedicated reading teacher will assist teachers with phonics skill development and support teachers in their literacy lesson planning to best set children up for success prior to entering kindergarten in the surrounding school districts

6. **Evaluations:** Should a parent or teacher observe there is benefit to evaluating a child for learning, development or behavior concerns or other reasons, we will employ our local therapeutic partners to assist

Our Mission Statement. Our mission is to develop productive, independent, and respectful lifelong learners. Rooted in the Whole Child Approach and its five planes of development, our philosophy aims to foster cognitive, spiritual, emotional, social and physical development to prepare children for their educational journey and for life.

Our Core Values. Simply put, our core values are **love and integrity**. We will always strive to handle matters lovingly and we will always strive to be truthful and pure-hearted in word and deed.

Parent Partnership. Our teachers are an extension of parents' love and care. We view ourselves as integral partners with parents in their child's development. There may be times when we ask parents to implement certain practices at home that support the growth and development goals of their child in the classroom. We may determine that a child needs an alternative schedule to help them transition to our school. We may ask for parents to seek 3rd party assistance for behaviors or medical advice for ailments, illness or suspected delays. Whatever we encounter with our students, we want to be partners with parents every step of the way in each of the five planes of development. We ask for parents' trust and enthusiastic cooperation and we will in turn work to help each child thrive at VMPS.

The Montessori Approach vs. Traditional Childcare

1. **Grace and courtesy and respect for self, others and the environment.** These are part of the curriculum unique to the Montessori classroom and are taught as deliberate lessons with the goal being for children to master them. Mastery of these lessons are necessary in order for the classroom to become normalized. We do not teach sharing work since each child strives to work independently with material. We teach harmonious, independent work yet yielding to each other and taking pride in our classroom environment as a whole.
2. **A prepared environment (neat, orderly, beautiful) of the five areas of the Montessori classroom vs. centers.** At no time during the Montessori work cycle will children be working with the same material at once unless specifically grouped to do so. We do not rotate groups of children to engage in the same activities throughout the classroom. Children must wait for the work to become available and as they complete work, teachers will observe them and present new lessons as they show readiness.
3. **Hands-on, concrete learning materials called "works" vs. play-based or worksheets-based learning.** Montessori materials have a purpose and we call the various "sets" of materials "works" so that the children assign value to their learning. Play is open-ended but the work cycle has a distinct start and finish with a "control of error", which is a built-in correction method to allow a child to independently check his or her work. We may use worksheets to verify a child is proficient, but not to do the teaching.
4. **Montessori mixed-age environment vs. age-specific curriculum.** This enables children to learn more complex materials as they show readiness instead of being restricted by age-specific lessons. Older children teach younger children through

modeling and work on leadership skills as younger children tend to persevere when an older child is involved in a lesson.

Montessori Affiliation. We utilize the North American Montessori Center's (NAMC) pre-primary and primary course material and diploma program to train aspiring Montessori teachers. We integrate Trillium Montessori resources for training and continuous education. We have American Montessori Society (AMS) teachers on staff in addition to our NAMC teachers. Grace and Courtesy lessons (rules of the Montessori classroom) are woven into our monthly lesson plans to develop a love for working respectfully with the materials and each other. Our curriculum is supplemented with Science of Reading instruction, which is rooted in phonological awareness.

Enrichment. Our enrichment offering includes Music, American Sign Language, Art and Veggiecation (teaching children about healthy eating). When we can find butterfly eggs, we study the life cycle of the butterfly in the fall. We also have an organic garden, which we generally plant twice a year. We celebrate a different continent each month and Art, Veggiecation and Music are informed by our continent theme. Children engage in art projects inspired by the continent's art, artists or famous facts; they taste the cuisine or ingredients of that culture and they sing songs and listen to music originating from that region.

Christian Influence. Maria Montessori based her philosophy on the Whole Child Approach, which includes Spiritual development as one of the five planes of whole child development. At VMPS, we weave Christian values into our everyday experiences. Our classrooms are named after the Fruit of the Spirit in building 1525 and faith-filled words in building 1520. VMPS staff pray with children, sing Christian songs and engage in devotions appropriate for young children. We celebrate Christian holidays and our music program entails singing Christian songs around those holidays. VMPS has an annual Christmas program where students perform various songs, poems, and/or act out scenes from the Bible. There are months of rehearsals leading up to the program. (Parents wishing for their child not to participate shall indicate as such in ProCare in the Notes section. We will do our best to honor requests, however, we will allow children to participate if they join in on their own.)

We welcome all religions and we encourage parents of other religions to inform us of their holidays and traditions to share with our students as appropriate. Exposure to these holidays and traditions to our students, however, is at the owners' sole discretion.

Montessori in the Home/Preparation for Enrollment

For children 1-5. We encourage parents to mimic the rules of the classroom at home. This includes changing into indoor shoes upon entering the home, washing hands prior to working with materials (or toys), identifying or creating a defined space like on a towel or small table top, rolling out the towel and rolling it back up, playing with one item at a time and putting it back before taking another item, cleaning up any spills or messes, using a quiet voice inside, responding to gentle ringing of a bell for a transition warning or transition to another activity or if the volume of play is too loud, using careful hands and feet, using the toilet independently, opening lunch containers and eating independently, throwing away trash from meals, etc. Fostering independence in areas where children are showing readiness or introducing an act of

independence boosts confidence to separate from parents at drop off. This can be as simple as allowing your child to carry his or her own backpack or water bottle when they arrive at school.

Hours of Operation for All Programs

General hours of operation are 7 am to 6 pm, year round, for full-time students. VMPS is closed on Federal holidays, two days in August to prepare for the new school year, one week over Christmas and for teacher workdays throughout the year. See our latest calendar on our website for details and specific dates. Half-day, school-day kindergarten and after-school programs follow the Fort Mill School District calendar.

- Half-day students attend 8 am to 1 pm
- School-day students attend 8 am to 2:30 pm
- After-school students attend from bus drop off until 6 pm
- Full-time summer campers may attend 7 am to 6 pm
- Half-day summer camp offering changes year to year

School Closing and Delays. VMPS generally follows the Fort Mill School District for breaks and closures, including due to weather. We are open for full-time programs for FMSD teacher work days unless they align with one of our VMPS teacher workdays. We offer non-instructional care to our full-time students the second week of Christmas break and during Spring break.

Inclement Weather Policy. Generally VMPS will follow the Fort Mill School District (FMSD) closings and delays for inclement weather unless otherwise communicated. If FMSD is delayed, all VMPS students may arrive at 9 am. If FMSD is closed, parents should expect VMPS to be closed. Many of our teachers have children in the FMSD so their absence would hinder our ability to staff our classrooms and meet ratio requirements. If we determine we can safely remain open or open for the day, we will relay this via ProCare. Parents should keep their phones close to receive the latest updates during inclement weather.

Calendar

VMPS is closed for two days prior to the start of each school year in August. We are also closed on the following days: Labor Day, October teacher work day, the half-day before Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving and the day after, one week of or after Christmas depending on the year, MLK, Jr. Day, President's Day, Good Friday, April teacher workday, Memorial Day, Independence Day and possibly the day before or after depending on the year.

Daily Schedule

Drop off Routine. Kindergarten students attending for kindergarten credit must arrive at 8 am. Full-time primary students should arrive no later than 8:30 am daily as that is when the instructional day begins. Half-day students should arrive at 8 am. Infant and toddlers should arrive as close to 8:30 am as possible and not after 10:30 as a practice. Arriving after 10:30 am is allowed for appointments. Dropping off at our stated times is in the best interest of all students and helps us avoid distractions during the Montessori work cycle in particular.

Late Arrivals in Building 1525. If parents must arrive late, please do not drop off during circle time or nap time (generally 12-2:30). Arriving late can disrupt the classroom activities. Teachers will post daily schedules for all classrooms outside their door. They will email the schedule upon request.

Late Arrivals in Building 1520. Parents should plan to arrive by the applicable start time. If parents must arrive later, please do not drop off during your child's circle time. See your child's schedule for this timeframe. Parents must have working Brivo access. If arriving after 8:30 am, please enter the building, bring your child to the classroom and say goodbye at the classroom door, check your child in using the ProCare app and ensure the teacher is aware of your child's presence for proper accountability.

10:30 am Cut Off. Please plan to drop off prior to 10:30 am should you need to arrive late. If you must bring your child after 10:30 am, please confirm with our admin team that we can accept your child. We make staffing decisions based on children in attendance.

Enrollment Process

Continuous Enrollment. Our enrollment process is completed online via our website by a parent or guardian. To be added to our waitlist or placed in the queue for a space in a class, each child must be enrolled in our parent portal and the enrollment fee paid. VMPS continuously enrolls for ages birth through four years (or under school age children as of September 1st). This means if there is an opening in a class, the VMPS admin team will invite a new student to attend immediately. VMPS will hold the spot for up to two weeks, at which time billing will commence. If a student family delays the start date (for any reason, including travel, illness, etc.), billing will commence from the original date.

Should a family decide not to start once the space is available, the family may either pay tuition to hold the spot or join the waitlist in their original place in the queue. Depending on the time of enrollment and/or the class, the admin team may determine a trial and/or assessment is necessary prior to attending.

If a child is joining VMPS for the kindergarten or after school programs, those programs start on the first day of the new school year calendar.

Infants

Parents of infants should schedule a time to meet with our infant teacher(s) to discuss the sleeping and feeding schedule and what is needed for the first day. Each infant shall have a tightly fitted mini crib sheet, milk/formula bottles and/or food labeled with their name and the date, ample diapers and wipes, diaper cream if needed and a few changes of clothes. We have our regular teachers who care for our infants and also regular subs. Our entire admin team is comfortable with and happy to care for infants in the event teachers are out of the classroom.

Toddler Community

Parents of toddlers may meet with teachers prior to the first day or talk with teachers on their first day if time permits. Each toddler shall have socks, indoor shoes that remain at school, a tot cot, which is a light nap roll with an attached fleece blanket and pillow that fits into a pillow pocket, a labeled milk bottle and/or water bottle with name and date, diapers, wipes, and diaper cream if needed. Potty training children must have three pairs of clean underwear and pull-ups. As a reminder, lunch is brought from home and snacks are provided by the assigned family for that week.

Primary/Kindergarten

Children ages 3-6 are considered Montessori's primary age group. Traditionally, kindergarten is part of the primary age group and VMPS will move in this direction in the 2024-2025 school year. VMPS students who are age 5 as of September 1st, 2024 will be part of the primary classrooms and receive a kindergarten report card. Students attending for their kindergarten year must meet the attendance requirement of 180 days of attendance, arrive on-time for school and attend through the duration of the day, except for illness and occasional appointments. VMPS is required to offer two hours of rest time for children under school age.

Each primary-aged child shall have socks, indoor shoes that remain at school, a tot cot, which is a light nap roll with an attached fleece blanket and pillow that fits into a pillow pocket, a labeled milk bottle and/or water bottle with name and date, diapers, wipes, and diaper cream if needed. As a reminder, lunch is brought from home and snacks are provided by the assigned family for that week.

Class Changes/Student Movement

Infants shall be moved on or about their first birthday. Depending on the year, VMPS may offer an infant transition class where children ages 8-11 months transition out of the infant room and to a room for older infants/young toddlers. This classroom is dependent on the number of enrolled children in the infant age group and their development (crawling, walking, etc.)

Toddlers shall be moved around their birthday but depending on readiness. It is not uncommon for a toddler to remain in his or her classroom for months after a birthday. Our main concern is the dynamics of the classroom, both losing and gaining, and learning readiness. Independence and behavior are also considerations. Children nearing age three must be potty trained and this is a main consideration for movement to a primary classroom. In building 1520, three of our four primary classrooms do not have bathrooms connected to them so a staff member would be present in the hall during bathroom usage but independence is mostly required.

Unplanned movements may occur if a child's learning style would benefit from a different teaching style or classroom dynamic. If a child has behavioral concerns, a new classroom or teaching style may have a positive impact on his or her emotional or social development. Parents should remain open to whatever is best for their child and also the classroom as a whole.

Our Systems

Procare App. VMPS uses ProCare for online enrollment, billing, parent messaging, school-wide communication and child tracking, including recording significant events in a child's day (lunch, nap, toilet/diaper changes). Each parent must download ProCare and we ask for responsiveness to messages from teachers. Parents are responsible for checking their child in and out each day. If teachers or admin regularly discover children not checked in and out, this may result in a \$3 fee per occurrence.

Brivo App. This app allows parents to electronically open the front doors of each building. Our staff will email a link, which parents must access within 24 hours or it expires. If there is any issue with access, please inform our team to resolve it promptly.

Email. We use the Google platform and our general inbox is info@villagemontessori.com. Parents are encouraged to email us with billing or any administrative needs instead of messaging in ProCare.

Our Website. Please visit our website for up to date information regarding our calendar, handbook/policies, parent resources, etc,

Payment

Method. The standard method of tuition payment is ACH. There is no fee for paying using this method. A convenience fee of \$35 will be assessed to each non-standard form of payment such as debit or credit card. VMPS will accept a one-time payment of cash or check in the interim as a family is transitioning to VMPS and setting up their ACH draft in ProCare. Tuition is paid monthly for the following month and must be set up on auto-pay. VMPS reserves the right to charge legitimate fees such as late payment, returned payment, field trip, forgotten lunch, late pick-up, etc. via ProCare. Please refer to the Payment Policy Detail.

Enrollment and Enrichment Fees. These fees are non-refundable and apply to each student upon enrollment and are recurring annual fees. For returning students, the enrollment fee is charged on February 1st for the following school year to guarantee a space. The enrichment fee is charged on May 1st and offsets the expense of materials and supplies for our enrichment program for the following school year. If a student joins VMPS after January 1st, the enrichment fee for the current school year will be prorated at 50%.

Re-enrollment. All full-time preschool, half-day preschool and after-school students are automatically re-enrolled each year on February 1st and we will bill the enrollment fee for the following school year at that time. Please notify VMPS in writing if you do not plan to attend the following school year prior to February 1st to avoid being charged the enrollment fee. Please then notify us by email 30 days prior to your child's end date with the anticipated end date. Student families are responsible for the full 30 days' payment and students may attend throughout those 30 days.

Please note: Currently enrolled and attending half-day and after-school students will be charged a non-refundable deposit equal to the August tuition payment on May 1st for the following school year unless parents notify VMPS in writing by May 1st that their child will not attend the following school year. This deposit is to hold the spot through the summer for the following year. We have a limited number of spaces available for these programs.

Withdrawal. Please notify us by email 30 days prior to your child's end date with the anticipated end date. This applies to all students.

Vacation, Travel, or Missed Days. Tuition must be paid through any missed/partial days of attendance due to COVID, weather, illness, vacation, etc. This includes summer vacations and extensive travel.

Partial Days. From time to time we may determine that a child needs an alternative schedule for a variety of reasons. Those reasons include the child being new to a childcare setting, emotional or social concerns, and more. If a child is enrolled as a full-time student and the director or assistant director determines a temporary half-day schedule best meets the needs of the child, the family is still responsible for full-time tuition. If the child transfers to a classroom with a different schedule, the billing will be adjusted accordingly in the next billing cycle.

Refunds. VMPS does not issue refunds. Once a family pays fees and/or tuition, it is a show of commitment to attending VMPS. It also represents VMPS's commitment to holding that spot for their student based on the agreed upon start date or enrollment schedule.

School Supplies

VMPS is an academic-focused childcare facility. Each year we will request that parents provide a basic set of school supplies. Some supplies will be community and others, for individual child use.

Vaccinations/Sickness

Vaccinations. All enrolled children must have an updated SC DHEC immunization form in their file prior to attending or an appropriate medical or religious exemption. Parents who have out-of-state vaccination forms must have a medical professional or DHEC transfer the vaccinations to a SC form. Parents who are not able to comply with DHEC requirements must secure alternate care until the requirement is met. DHEC inspects our files and provides deadlines, which our owner is required to meet or faces penalties, both financial and legal.

Parent Responsibility. Our first line of defense against illness is our parents' diligence and sense of social responsibility to ensure they are not bringing their child to our school with exclusionary symptoms or signs of illness. We ask that parents intentionally observe their child each morning prior to dropping off to notice any symptoms or signs of illness and we trust our parents will keep their child home should they suspect illness.

Exclusionary Symptoms. Per DHEC guidelines, any children with a fever (temperature of 100.4 or greater), vomiting or three occurrences of diarrhea in one day may not attend in a childcare setting. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication to return. For vomiting and diarrhea, children may return to school 24 hours after these symptoms subside with or without medication. VMPS staff may ask a parent to pick up their child if the temperature is below 100.4 if they are also presenting other symptoms such as excessive upper respiratory symptoms, lethargy, irritability or any other concerning symptom that does not allow for proper care for the child's needs in a group childcare setting.

COVID Exclusion. As of August 1, 2022, any child who tests positive for COVID must isolate for five days and mask for an additional 5 days if possible given their age. If a child is not able or willing to mask or is under age 2, the director or designee will call DHEC for advice.

Indoor/Outdoor Shoes. To cut down on germs in the classroom, please send a pair of indoor shoes to be kept at school. Only outdoor shoes should be worn outside of the building.

Communicable Disease. If your child has a communicable disease, please notify the director(s) immediately so we may notify other parents.

Reporting. Conditions and symptoms that are reportable according to the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control will be reported to the proper authority.

Exclusion List from the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Children with these conditions are to be excluded from school until they are able to return according to the individual condition's criteria. (P) is for "parent note required" to return and (M) is for "medical note required" to return.

- **Bronchiolitis or RSV:** Keep your child home while he/she has a fever or is acting too sick to play with other children.
- **(P) Chicken Pox / Varicella:** Your child may return once all of the sores and blisters are dried or scabbed over. If there are no scabs, he/she may return when no new sores appear for 24 hours.
- **(P) Diarrhea:** For *most kinds* of diarrhea (defined as 3 or more loose stools in 24 hours), your child should stay home until diarrhea stops for at least 24 hours, or until a doctor clears him/her to return to school.
- **Special Circumstances - (M) Blood or mucus in stool with diarrhea:**
 - If your child can use the restroom or can contain his stool in diaper-type underwear, he does not have to remain home if the diarrhea is known to be from a non-contagious condition, or if it continues after he completes antibiotics for a diarrhea-causing illness.
 - If your child is a medically fragile child or needs help with going to the bathroom, he/she may need to be out of school if the condition makes it difficult for teachers to maintain proper supervision or keep the classroom clean.
- **Diarrhea from a diagnosed infection:**
 - **(P) *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Norovirus*, *Rotavirus*, and most types of *Salmonella*:** Your child may return to school after diarrhea stops for 24 hours.
 - **(M) *E. coli*:** For the most severe type of *E. coli*, your child must be out of school until the diarrhea stops and two lab tests taken at least 24 hours apart test negative for *E. coli* O157:H7.
 - **(M) *Salmonella Typhi* (*Typhoid fever*):** If your child has Typhoid fever, he/she must be out of school until the diarrhea stops and 3 lab tests taken at least 24 hours apart test negative for *Salmonella Typhi*.
 - **(M) *Shigella* --** Students of any age in childcare, or medically fragile students in school must be out of school until the diarrhea stops for at least 24 hours AND a lab test is negative for *Shigella*.
- **(P) Fever by itself:**
 - Children over 4 months old -- Keep your child home if he/she has a fever 101°F or higher (if taken by mouth), 100°F or higher if taken under the arm, or 102°F or higher if taken in the bottom.
 - Once his/her fever is gone, your child can return to school.
- **(M) Fever with Rash, Behavior Change or other Symptoms:** Keep your child home and take him to a doctor or clinic if he has a fever with other signs of severe illness such as a rash, change in behavior, earache, vomiting, confusion, sore throat or irritability.
- **Flu / Influenza or Influenza-Like Illness (ILI):** If your child has the flu, he/she will be excluded from school/childcare for a fever of 100.4°F or higher with cough and/or sore throat. He/she cannot return until he/she is fever free for at least 24 hours, without any fever medicines.
- **(M) German Measles / Rubella / 3-Day Measles:** Keep your child home until seven days after rash starts.
- **Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease:** If your student has hand, foot, and mouth disease, he/she should be out of school while she has fever, open sores or blisters that are not yet crusted over, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing, or is not feeling well enough to engage in routine activities.

- **(P/M) Head Lice:**
 - If your child has crawling lice or nits (eggs) we will call you to pick him/her up immediately. After his/her first treatment with an in-home or professional lice-removal product or service, if there are no active lice crawling on your child's head AND there are no viable nits within 1 inch from your child's scalp your child may return to school.
 - School staff will check your child's head seven-ten days after treatment for any newly hatched crawling lice or new viable eggs. If within that seven-ten day window, there are any present, we will call you to pick up your child and you must:
 - Have your child **professionally** re-treated for lice before coming back to school and provide a statement or receipt of services OR
 - Obtain a note from your child's pediatrician's office (nurse, MD, NP, etc.) that your child is clear to come back to school meeting the criteria of no live bugs and no nits within 1 inch from the scalp
 - Email a statement to the director describing the action you took at home to clean linens, furniture, car seats, etc.
- **(M) Hepatitis A / Yellow Jaundice:** If your child has acute hepatitis A, he/she may return one week after the start of the jaundice.
- **(M) HIB (*Haemophilus influenzae* Type B):** If your child has a proven HIB infection, he/she will need to remain out of school until a health care provider clears him/her to return.
- **(P) Impetigo:** If your child has dry, honey-colored crusty sores that can be covered, he/she will be sent home at the end of the day. If the sores are weepy, oozing or wet or cannot be covered and kept dry, the child will be sent home immediately. He/she may return after receiving antibiotics for 24 hours if the sores have stopped oozing and are starting to get smaller, or if the sores can be covered completely with a watertight dressing.
- **(M) Measles / Red Measles / 10 Day Measles:** If your child has measles, he/she can return four days after the rash begins if he/she has no fever and feels well enough to participate in regular school activities.
- **(M) Meningitis:** If your child shows signs of meningitis (high fever, rash, stiff neck), he/she must remain out of school until a healthcare provider clears him/her to return.
- **(M) Mouth Sores inside the mouth**
- If your child has sores inside the mouth and also drools, he/she should stay home until his/her health care provider confirms that the sores are not contagious.
- **(M) Mumps:** If your child has mumps, he/she can return to school five days after the onset of parotid gland swelling.
- **Pinkeye / Conjunctivitis:** If your child has pinkeye, please keep him or her home if the eye(s) is secreting fluid. If your child has fever or severe eye pain, take him or her to see a doctor.
- **(M) Rash:** If your child has a rapidly spreading rash or a rash with fever or behavior change, she will be excluded from school immediately and we will call you to pick him/her up.
- **(M) Ringworm (Tinea):** If your child has **ringworm on the scalp** we will call you to pick him/her up immediately. At the very least, he/she must remain out of school from the end of the day until he has begun treatment with a prescription oral antifungal medication.

- o If your child has **ringworm of the body**, he/she does not have to remain out of school as long as the affected area stays completely covered by clothing. However, we recommend treatment for your child.
- **(M) Scabies:** If your child has scabies, he/she cannot attend school until treatment/medication has been applied.
- **(P) Shingles:** If your child has shingles sores or blisters that cannot be covered, he/she must be kept home until the sores are dried/scabbed.
- **Skin Infections from Staph or Strep (including MRSA), or Herpes Gladiatorum:** Your child may attend school if the sores are covered with clothes or dressings, and if the drainage does not come through clothes or dressing.
- **Stomachache (severe) or abdominal pain** If your child suffers from stomach pain for 2 hours or more, we will call you to pick him/her up. We recommend you take him/her to see a healthcare provider, especially if the pain is severe or fever accompanies the pain.
- **(M) "Strep Throat" / Streptococcal Pharyngitis:** If your child has Strep throat, he/she can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics if there is no fever.
- **Sty (or Sty):** If your child has a draining/oozing sty that cannot be covered, he/she should remain home until the draining stops.
- **(M) Tuberculosis (TB):** If your child has active TB, keep him/her home until the doctor treating the TB confirms that your child is no longer contagious.
- **(M) Whooping Cough / Pertussis:** If your child contracts whooping cough, he/she can return to school after completing five days of prescribed antibiotics, unless you are directed otherwise by DHEC or the director.

Medication Log. Parents must label and sign in all medications in the log located in the front office in building 1525. No medications are allowed in backpacks/within a child's reach. This includes diaper cream and sunscreen per DSS regulations. Medications must be stored in a locked cabinet. During sign-in, parents must include their child's name, medication type, method, dose, frequency, expiration date and parent's signature. Medication should be in its original packaging and labeled with the child's name. Parents should give the first dose or application of any NEW medication or topical cream/spray at home in case there is an allergic reaction.

Toilet Training

Toddlers - Most children show readiness between age two and 2.5 years old. Parents should take on the task first attempting to potty train over a weekend. A successful weekend of potty training means a child has worn underwear all weekend during the day and is able to use the potty with minimal accidents and willingness to use the potty. Children must show readiness for our teachers to begin the process the following Monday. This includes asking/telling a teacher when he or she has to go or willingness when asked to go. If a child has 3 accidents in one day, he or she should wear a pull-up for the remainder of the day.

*Parents should introduce the process six months prior to their child's 3rd birthday and work diligently with teachers to work towards independent toilet usage prior to his or her 3rd birthday.

Age 3 - Children must be fully potty trained and use the toilet independently, including wiping, removing/putting back on clothing and washing hands, prior to moving to a primary (ages 3-5) classroom or to be enrolled in half-day. If a child needs extra support and we have the staff available, we will provide it on a case by case basis.

Ages 4+ - By this age, children should be completely independent.

Allergies

Our buildings are nut-free. There is a growing number of nut allergies amongst our students. Parents must indicate any allergies in their ProCare profile as well as provide our office with an allergy plan from the allergist to be kept in the child's file. These allergies will be posted in each classroom. There may be other allergies that are severe enough to ban from specific classrooms. If this is the case, we will notify parents and ask that none of these allergens be included in lunches or snacks. Parents of allergic children must supply their child's snack and inform us in writing if their child may participate in Veggiecation food tasting or classroom celebrations. We want to be able to include all children in classroom events but we will do so only if we are able to keep all children safe.

Food and Nutrition

General Guidelines. Children's nutrition is an important part of learning. We will always strive to serve our students healthy snacks and treats free of harmful ingredients. We encourage parents to limit added sugar and offer a variety of nutritious lunch foods that children like and will eat. Please note the following requirements for donated snacks, birthday/holiday celebrations, and lunches brought from home.

- No artificial ingredients
- Snacks should contain 8g or less of sugar with the only exception being whole fruits
- Birthday cupcakes or treats should be mini, plain or contain non-dyed frosting, sugars, etc.
- Lunches should contain a balanced assortment of fruits, veggies, protein and whole grains barring any dietary restrictions

Our staff will refuse to serve anything that contains artificial ingredients or is excessive in sugar. Please contact our admin team for any clarification on what is allowed prior to bringing in food that is questionable. If a child's behavior causes concern, we will first look at his diet and may make recommendations for improving diet.

Donated Snacks. Each student's family will be on a rotation to provide snacks for the class about four times per year. We encourage parents to take their children shopping as a practical life lesson and so they can help make healthy choices about the snacks they provide for their friends. Teachers will share a list of snacks the children like to eat. The most economical way to purchase snacks is in bulk from Costco but there are always deals at the local grocery stores, too. Parents should plan to send enough snacks for the number of children in the class x 2 snacks per day x 5 days per week. The most loved snack options are berries, bananas (½ serving size), cut apples, tangerines, grapes, cubed melon, any bite-sized raw veggie with dressing, hummus or guacamole, yogurt squeezers, whole grain cereal, whole grain crackers and cheese, granola clusters for older children, individually packaged bars, etc.

*Parents may request that we order snacks for their child for the week. VMPS will charge via ProCare. Generally a snack order costs \$50-60 for the week.

Discipline

We strive to promote a peaceful and calm environment. VMPS will not practice corporal punishment. Guidelines of appropriate behavior expected of all students include: respect, courtesy and consideration for other students, teacher(s), and respect for their classroom, materials and individual belongings. We recognize that young children are at the beginning stages of learning how to respect others' space and belongings. We also understand that they may exhibit behaviors such as biting, hitting, kicking, pushing, etc., as they are learning how to use their words to express themselves. Parents should be aware that these behaviors can present themselves at school in a classroom environment even if they do not exhibit such behaviors at home. We ask for complete partnership from parents as we help children overcome these behaviors. We expect full participation and reinforcement at home.

The following applies to preschool and kindergarten students:

Positive reinforcement. Complimenting a child on what he/she is doing right or complimenting others around the child who are modeling good behavior in order to influence the child to change his/her behavior.

Redirecting. Changing the course of a child's behavior by turning the child's attention to another activity, another area of the classroom or to simply observe others who are modeling good behavior.

Stepping away. Leading the child by the hand away from all others so that he/she is not embarrassed in front of his/her peers; teachers will discuss the infraction, gain commitment to improve behavior and send the child back to work.

Gluing. Keeping the child close to the teacher, either at her side or on her lap; the child has the opportunity to observe the teacher presenting a lesson to another child or observe another part of the classroom routine as a reminder of how to appropriately use materials or engage in activities.

Additional Steps. If a child continues to disrupt others around him/her or is physically hurting himself or others, the teacher will call an administrative team member to come get the child or take him to the office. The child will engage in quiet work in the office for a period of up to five minutes (one minute per year old, i.e., 3 minutes for a 3-year-old). The administrative team member will reassess at that time and determine if the behavior warrants a call to parents. When a child has been involved in repeated incidents during the day, a staff member may call parents to come pick up their child. **Parental support and follow-through at home is required at this point.** Talking through the situation, having quiet time at home without privileges and encouragement to try again the next day at school is expected.

Dismissal of a Child. If a situation results in sending a child home two or more times, the director will reassess the suitability of our school environment by meeting with parents to discuss the needs of the child, strategies that have been or could be implemented, and what changes would need to be made for VMPS to be a viable educational setting for the student family. If incidents continue, the director may determine it is best for the child to attend only a portion of the day or not attend at all. We ask that parents are willing to try our

recommendations to improve behavior. We will work with parents diligently to this end. If parents are unwilling or unable to follow through with reinforcing our efforts, or if every effort is made by all adults involved and the situation is still unmanageable, the director will ask the student family to discontinue attendance at VMPS.

Five Incidents Rule. Should the following incidents occur five times in a one month, the director may ask that the student discontinue attending VMPS: biting, hitting, kicking, poking, etc., with such force that it causes bleeding, puncture or bruising another child or teacher; deliberate pushing, tripping, spitting, or any action that causes bodily harm or destruction of school materials, walls, windows, fixtures, furniture or supplies. This rule also applies to serious safety concerns like leaving the classroom or running away from teachers outside of the fenced outdoor play areas.

Inability to Transition to VMPS (With or Without Behavior Concerns). If a child has extreme difficulty transitioning to VMPS and continuously cries and is inconsolable for a period of more than two hours beginning at drop off, we will call parents to pick up. If after 1-3 days there is no improvement in the child's ability to transition, we will discuss a part-time schedule to assist with the transition. The director will determine how long to continue a part-time schedule on a case by case basis.

School-aged children. We expect children age 6 and older to have a greater capacity to behave with kindness and in a respectful manner. Therefore school-aged children will be allowed three incidents vs. five. At no time will we tolerate repeated acts or threats of physical harm or bullying of any sort, which is defined as the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing or threat, to abuse, aggressively dominate or intimidate (Wikipedia). If a one-time occurrence takes place and parents actively participate in the solution and the child corrects his or her behavior immediately, we may allow the child to continue attending VMPS. All decisions regarding discipline are at the discretion of the director/owner.

Child Accountability

Child Check-in and Check-out. It is the parent's responsibility to check their child in and out of their classroom using ProCare taking care to do so at the actual times a child arrives or departs. This enables our staff to focus on supervising children. Our admin team makes staffing decisions based on the ratio of students to teachers in the classroom. It is an important part of our daily operations to have an accurate count of children in the classroom. Failure to do so could result in DSS violations. Therefore, if parents fail to check their child in and out, we may assess a fee to do this on their behalf. In the off chance the teacher does not immediately acknowledge a child's arrival or departure the parent should make the teacher aware prior to leaving.

*If ProCare or the WiFi is not allowing the parent to check in or out, please promptly inform the teacher or office staff.

Child Release/Full and Free Access. Parents must complete the hard copy VMPS Child Release form to be kept on file. Parents are also required to add regular pick-up persons in their ProCare profile. VMPS will not release a child to a person not on the hard copy list (or without

the notification in writing). However, parents listed on the enrollment form will have free and clear access to their children at all times unless otherwise noted in a court order.

Child Tracking. Per SC DSS regulation we conduct face to name accountability when children move throughout the facility or outside and every 30 minutes regardless of where the children are. Teachers will use a paper tracking log to indicate a child's arrival time and check off that they have conducted face to name upon movement and every 30 minutes. This is done in addition to parents signing their child in and out using ProCare.

Special Events and Birthdays

We encourage parents to bring non-food items to celebrate birthdays. Parents may attend their child's birthday celebration and may bring pictures of their child to show the class either loose or on poster board.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency Medical and Preparedness Plan. An emergency is when a severe injury or illness, fire/gas leak, exposure to hazardous material, natural disaster, or intruder is threatening life or may cause serious damage or harm. In these cases, VMPS staff will respond immediately by initiating emergency medical or preparedness procedures appropriate to their level of training and type of threat.

Medical. If ambulance transport to a hospital is required, VMPS will instruct the ambulance to go to Levine Children's Hospital if there is a choice in the matter and unless the child's medical form on file indicates a preference for another hospital.

Off-site Evacuations. If off-site evacuation is necessary, the children will be relocated to the Four Seasons clubhouse located adjacent to the childcare facility. Children will walk with their teachers. If outdoor conditions deem it unsafe to walk to the clubhouse, children will remain in their classrooms until their parents can pick up their child or make arrangements for pick up. If a parent is arranging for someone to pick up their child they must add that person to ProCare.

Gas Leak. The director will call York County Natural Gas 803-323-5315 and request a technician be sent to the premises; the director will turn off gas if possible. All children and adults in the center will exit through the nearest doorway away from the fire or leak to an area well away from the building in the large fenced outdoor play area. Teachers will prop doors open if time permits as they leave the building. They will account for all children by checking the attendance log and reporting to the director or designee as soon as possible. No one shall reenter the building until permission is given by the gas technician. The director will initiate notification to all parents to pick up children as soon as safety permits.

Weather/Natural Disasters. All staff members and children will take shelter in the hallways and bathrooms as needed in each building and as far away from windows and doors as possible. Upon notification of a tornado, hurricane or similar severe weather conditions, all teachers and children will take shelter inside. The director will monitor local weather reports and keep parents informed regarding pick-up needs should parents need to pick up early.

Intruder. VMPS has internal intruder drill procedures should we be faced with this scenario.

Emergency shut-off. Should it be required, the director or lead teacher will turn off the particular utilities in question.

Electricity Location. The electrical box is located in the teacher break room (immediate right wall when entered from the corridor) and houses the main breaker for the building. To turn off the electricity, grasp the red “Main Breaker” lever handle and pull down to the “Off” position.

Gas Location. The gas main and valve is located outside at the meter, approximately halfway down the backside of the building. To turn off the gas, grasp the yellow lever handle and pull 90 degrees towards your body to make the lever perpendicular to the horizontal pipe.

Water Location. The water main and valve is located outside at the meter, also approximately halfway down the backside of the building. To turn off the water, grasp the round valve and turn clockwise until it stops; if it does not turn at all, apply a few drops of lubricant (located in the janitor’s closet in the center of the facility’s corridor) on the valve stem and using a work glove (janitor’s closet), try again.

Fire Evacuation. Staff will evacuate anyone in immediate danger and the director or designee will pull the fire alarm or call out “Fire! Fire! Fire!”. The first teacher outside will dial 911 from his/her cell phone and tell the operator, “There is a fire at Village Montessori and Preparatory School located at 1525 Onyx Ridge off of Gold Hill Road in the Gold Hill Traditions commercial park.”

Staff will immediately begin evacuation of all children and all adults in the center through the nearest exit away from the fire to an area well away from the building in the large fenced outdoor play area. If time permits and without compromising safety, teachers should make every effort to take their classroom attendance log, first aid kit, and their wallet/purse.

Teachers will close all doors as they leave the building. They will account for all children by checking the attendance log, taking FACE TO NAME accountability and reporting to the director or designee as soon as possible. Director and staff trained in first aid will provide first aid as needed. No one shall reenter the building until permission is given by the fire officials. The director will initiate notification to all parents to pick up children as soon as safety permits.

Privacy and Social Media Policy

Use of Personal Information. Village Montessori and Preparatory School (VMPS) does not collect any personal information unless you voluntarily provide it by sending us an e-mail, participating in a survey, or completing a school form, whether it be hard copy or on-line. Personal information submitted will not be transferred to any non-affiliated third parties unless otherwise stated at the time of collection. When a user submits personally identifiable information it is used only for the purpose stated at the time of collection.

Confidentiality. All student and staff files are stored in a lockable cabinet and only the administration team and owners are authorized to access files.

Privacy. All sensitive or personal student family information is to be kept private. At no time will VMPS tolerate a violation of privacy to include on social media, in written forms and messages, in conversations and through use of pictures/videos. This applies to all staff and parents while inside VMPS or outside of VMPS as applicable.

Offers and advertisements. VMPS will not send parents any unsolicited commercial offers or advertisements at any time unless it pertains to school-related events, fundraisers or charitable efforts in which families might like to participate.

Consent. When consent for the use and disclosure of personal information is required, the school will seek consent from the appropriate person. In the case of a student's personal information, the school will seek the consent from the parent.

Physical files. All student files will be kept in lockable file cabinets in the administrative office. Children's files will be accessible only to the parent/guardian, owners/directors, teachers and DSS Child Care Licensing.

Verbal/electronic dissemination of personal information. VMPS staff will not share phone numbers, addresses or any other personal information about a student or his/her family, staff or the owners/directors unless parents' consent or it is in an emergency situation. Please note that teachers have access to their assigned students' parents' phone numbers in ProCare at all times in the event that they need to contact parents directly.

Website and social media. VMPS may use photographs and videos of students or their family on our website and social media. Reasons for use include school communication, promotions, public relations and advertising. If parents do not wish to consent to showing their child's face in videos and photos, they should indicate as such on the Policies and Procedures Signature Page. VMPS may use photos not showing faces at its discretion.

Facebook/Instagram. VMPS has a closed school-wide parents' Facebook page where VMPS staff will share information with the whole school. Teachers may also post to a classroom Facebook page for whole-class involvement. There is a public VMPS page, which is meant to engage with the public and we very much appreciate positive engagement and support from parents by "liking" posts, commenting, recommending our school, etc. There is also an IG page, which will contain the same posts and stories as Facebook.

Liability Insurance

VMPS will maintain liability insurance for the protection of its students, staff and physical facility at all times.

Provisional Employment

VMPS currently employs on a provisional basis. This means that upon receiving a favorable background check result via The SC Central Registry office, a clean arrest record and approval from our child care licensing specialist, we may hire teachers and have them start working with children prior to receiving the Federal fingerprint result.

Security

We take the safety of our students and the security of our school very seriously and we will always err on the side of safety and security. For increased safety of all members of the VMPS community, our building utilizes a keyless entry security system to access the corridor leading to the classrooms. VMPS employees and families will access the buildings with their Brivo app on their phone. Door 1 is for building 1525 and Door 2 is for 1525. At no time should any doors be left propped open unless a staff member is immediately present nor should parents hold the doors open for other parents whom they do not recognize.

Transportation

VMPS transports children from local elementary schools to VMPS and to field trips and other off-site outings. When parents register for the after-school, kindergarten and summer programs, their initials and signatures throughout the on-line registration process indicate consent for VMPS to transport their child/children. VMPS staff will share information for each field trip unrelated to after-school care and parents must sign a permission slip to allow VMPS to transport their child/children for such outings. All VMPS bus drivers will hold a valid driver's license and are insured through VMPS. Children of school age and older are allowed to ride on the bus. No preschool-aged children are allowed on the bus. This applies to all full-time and part-time students as well as summer campers. Under no circumstances will VMPS employees drive students in their personal vehicles unless those students are children of staff members and those staff members approve.

Water Play

During summer months, VMPS may at times provide water play activities with water tables, sprinklers, fire department-run hose, etc. At no time will VMPS provide immersion activities where children are immersing their bodies in water or wading in water. We ask parents to ensure they apply sunscreen on their child prior to drop off, have a towel, change of dry clothes and are wearing closed-toe water shoes and other appropriate attire along with sunscreen. When playing on the turf, children may be barefoot.