

*The Meher Schools*  
Parent Handbook  
2020–21



## A Note About This Year's *Parent Handbook*

Responding to the pandemic has required that we make changes to many of our procedures to safeguard the health of our students and staff and their families. At some point, though maybe not this year, we expect things will return to “normal.” When that happens, in most cases we’ll revert to the original procedures.

For this reason, we’ve left the original handbook wording intact and noted any “COVID Changes” at the beginning of sections where we’ve had to make mitigations. These changes supersede any information in the original text that conflicts with the COVID Change indicated.

Otherwise, the original text generally still applies.

Sections that are not applicable during this period are in gray type.

There will be further changes over the course of the year. We’ll let you know about these through *Wednesday Messages* and *eNotes*. Please take the time to read them. They are our only means of keeping the school community informed.

If you have questions, please contact us. These are confusing times for us all.

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1.

*Administration and  
Financial Policies*

The Meher Schools  
999 Leland Dr.  
Lafayette, CA 94549

## Quick Reference Information

Phone: (925) 938-9958

Fax: (925) 938-9184

### School Hours:

Preschool: 9 a.m.–noon

Kindergarten: 8:40 a.m.–2 p.m.

Grades 1 and 2: 8:20 a.m.–2 p.m.

Grades 2–5: 8:20 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

### Administrators:

Preschool Director: Susie Kohl—[susie@meherschools.org](mailto:susie@meherschools.org)

#### Elementary School Co-Principals

Vince d'Assis—[vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org)

Ivy Summers—[ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org)

Parent Resource Center: [www.MeherSchoolsParents.org](http://www.MeherSchoolsParents.org)

The newly relocated **school office** is located off the Tier 1 hallway around the corner from Room 1.

The **preschool director**'s office is in the Preschool Center. It's located on the first tier, at the top of the steps to the left of Room 2.

The **elementary co-principals**' office is on Tier 1, in the small room off the Tier 2 parking lot, around the corner from the Office.

Tax I.D.: 38-3678484

Community Care License Number (Preschool): 073405648

# COVID-19: New Realities at School

Because of the number of restrictions on life at school and our need for extreme caution regarding the spread of contagions, we won't be able to count on some aspects of school life we've always taken for granted. We apologize in advance for the inconvenience these new, necessary procedures might cause.

## Parents May Need to Pick Their Child Up at Any Time

There is an increased likelihood that we'll have to call you to pick up your child at any time, for a number of reasons. **If we call, you'll need to come immediately.** If you work, we recommend letting your employer know this is a possibility. **Make sure your emergency form includes at least one other person who can come to school immediately to pick up your child.** We recommend creating contingency plans for childcare.

## We May Close a Room if We Don't Have Adequate Staff

Staffing under the new restrictions is challenging and requires more teachers than usual. Because teachers cannot go between cohorts of children, finding substitutes is exceedingly challenging. If a sub works with a cohort for one day, they cannot work in another room for two weeks.

**There's a chance we'll have to close a classroom temporarily if a teacher becomes sick or is put on quarantine and we can't find adequate sub coverage.** We'll give you as much notice as possible if this happens, via email. This again highlights the need to have a contingency plan for childcare and to read *eNotes*.

## Pick-Up and Drop-Off Will Take Longer Than Usual

Each new health and safety procedure required at pick-up and drop-off adds time to your usual routine. There may be lines in the parking lot and lines at health-screening stations. **Please plan for this extra time, knowing that it might take longer to get to work in the morning and to get to your child's classroom when you pick them up.**

## Cohorts of Children Cannot Mix

Each group of children and teachers remains together from the beginning of the day through the end of aftercare. Children may not transfer from one classroom to another or visit friends in another classroom. Similarly, teachers work with only one cohort of children.

## Distance Learning Permission for Elementary School

All elementary families are required to read and sign a distance learning permission form giving consent for their children to participate in streaming activities over the internet.

## Medical Conditions and Vulnerable/High-Risk Groups

Our programs are not designed for those who are at high risk. Families with children in this category should consult with their doctor about enrolling. People of any age who have serious

medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Health information including information about allergies and other medical conditions needs to be disclosed when completing enrollment/re-enrollment forms.

## COVID-19 Waiver

All families are required to read and sign a waiver regarding the risks of on-campus programs during a pandemic.

## Current Health Guidelines

Click here for [Staying Healthy](#), our current health guidelines. This document will be updated as necessary throughout the year. Because this is a Google Doc, it will always be up-to-date.

# Legally Required Forms: Emergency, Health, and Pick-up Information

For each child, certain information is required by law to be maintained in the school office. Parents are required to provide this information annually and to keep it updated throughout the year. This includes:

- Information/Emergency Form
- Child's Preadmission Health History (preschool only)
- Immunization records and Physical Exam report
- Parents' Rights and Personal Rights (preschool only)
- Registration and Financial Agreement
- Medical Alert Action Plan Updates

These forms are sent out yearly to parents at the time of registration for the upcoming year. According to California law, children may not attend school unless these records are complete and in our files. These records are reviewed annually by state agencies.

It is necessary that you turn all forms in on time. We determine the number of staff members we need to care for your child based on the information you provide.

## Information/Emergency Form—Changes and Updates

Notify the Office immediately, in writing, of any changes in the information you provided on your Information/Emergency Form. Our staff refers to this information when we need to reach parents. It is critical that we be able to reach you quickly in case of an emergency.

Please be sure we have your current phone numbers (home, work, and cell)! It's also important to let us know which numbers to call first.

To inform us of changes of address, phone numbers, or people authorized to pick up your child, complete a Changes to Information/Emergency Form. Click here to [download the form](#) from the Parent Resource Center. The form is also available in the Office.

In the event your child needs to be picked up and we can't reach you, we'll contact someone on your Information/Emergency Form. In the event we can't reach you, it's essential that you've selected several people whom the school can contact. In the event of a school-wide or local disaster, we would use *eNotes* or phones to communicate information about procedures to release students to someone on your Information/Emergency Form.

## Health Updates

It is critical that we have current information regarding your child's health. If there are changes or updates regarding your child's health, please alert the school immediately, using the Changes to Information/Emergency Form. (See part 2, "[Health Information](#).")

### Questions About Registration, Enrollment, Schedules, Billing, and Tuition

For questions related to the preschool, contact Susie Kohl ([susie@meherschools.org](mailto:susie@meherschools.org)). For questions related to the elementary school, contact Vince d'Assis ([vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org)) or Ivy Summers ([ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org)) Please be sure to include your child's name and as much detail about your situation as possible.

## Medical Alert: Life-Threatening Illness or Allergy

If your child has a life-threatening illness or allergy, complete a Life-Threatening Medical Alert form (available in the Office), a detailed description of your child's symptoms and action plan. We'll contact you to discuss your child's situation and to direct you in completing the Life Threatening Medical Alert Protocol and Permission to Give Medication forms. It's important to keep this information and medicines current and to report any changes in your child's health status. All medications prescribed by a physician must have the prescription attached. (See "[Medications at School](#)" in part 2 for additional information.)

## Temporary Pick-up Permission

If someone is picking up your child who isn't listed on your Information/Emergency Form, please do the following.

**Preschool.** Each preschool room has a form next to the sign-in sheet for parents to indicate pick-up changes and permissions.

**Elementary.** Fill out a green Elementary Pick-Up Information form, which is available in the Office and in the front of the roll book.

Please leave the form in the Office Drop Box or slip it under the Office door if you're here before or after office hours. Do *not* put the form in the box outside the Office door. It is not a mailbox; it is used for blank forms only.

**Be certain to tell anyone who is picking up your child to go to the Office for a temporary identification badge.** They will need to show their driver's license. We will not release your child to anyone who does not have identification and who does not have written permission from you.

See part 5, "[Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child.](#)"

## Temporary Childcare Arrangements When You Go Out of Town

The school office must be notified in writing if you'll be out of town and someone else will be responsible for the care of your child. The Office then communicates this information to the child's teacher(s) and to daycare personnel if the child is in daycare. See the next section for more information.

## Changing Your Child's Schedule

### *Temporary*

Whenever possible, please inform us several days in advance when you need to make temporary changes in your child's schedule. We will try, but may not always be able, to accommodate your request.

**Preschool.** If you need to change your preschooler's schedule temporarily (e.g., extend the child's hours for a day or come to school very early for a week), please fill out a Request for Temporary Change in Schedule: White Pony. The Office will forward it to your child's teacher and contact you if it is approved.

**K-5.** To change an elementary student's daycare schedule temporarily, fill out a Request for Temporary Change in Schedule: Meher School. We'll notify you if your request is approved.

The Temporary Change in Schedule forms are available in the Office.

### *Permanent*

If you wish to change your child's schedule permanently, fill out a Schedule Change Request: Permanent. *Requests must be in the Office no later than two weeks before the beginning of the following month to be considered for that month.* Download the Schedule Change Request: Permanent [here](#) from the Parent Resource Center or pick one up in the Office.

We'll let you know as soon as possible whether we're able to accommodate your request. The change, if approved, will go into effect on the first day of the following month.

If you wish to extend your child's aftercare hours, we'll need time to rearrange staff coverage, and unfortunately, there's no guarantee that we'll be able to find coverage. If we're unable to accommodate your needs at the time you apply, your name will be placed on a waiting list. If you reduce the number of hours your child is in daycare, there's no guarantee they can be added again later.

# The Meher Schools

## Registration and Financial Policies

### 2020–21

Our Tax I.D. No. is **38-3678484**. It is included on each statement.

**You are asked to save your monthly statements for your tax records.**

Please *do not* return them with your payment.

**The Meher Schools** has a preschool division, the **White Pony School**, and an elementary division, the **Meher School**.

The **White Pony School** offers care and supervision of preschool-age children and is licensed by the Department of Social Services. This department and its Community Care Licensing Division have the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit child or facility records without prior consent.

### General Policies

1. **Tuition is charged on the 15th of each month, due and payable in advance.** Bills are emailed by the 20th of each month. You will receive an e-mail from Curacubby, our online billing service, when your bill becomes available. You may pay your invoices online through Curacubby or pay by check or cash. If you pay by check, you may pay your bill on the 15th of the month, whether or not you have received your invoice from Curacubby. Payment is considered delinquent if not received by the end of the billing month. If tuition payments are more than 30 days in arrears, the student may be dropped from registration until the account is paid in full.
2. Tuition for September through June is calculated on a yearly basis, and may be paid in full in September or divided into 10 equal monthly payments. Tuition and full-time daycare for December and other months that have extended holidays are the same as for any other month. Monthly daycare does not include special daycare weeks during holidays. There is an extra charge for these added elective daycare weeks in winter and spring.
3. We understand that there may be circumstances when a child will be withdrawn mid-year: parent job loss, unexpected family move, other family emergency. In these special circumstances, notification of withdrawal from school or programs must be submitted in writing at least two weeks before the month of withdrawal. If notification is given after the two weeks prior to a month of withdrawal, tuition for the following month will be charged even if the child does not attend that month. No refund will be given for any month (or partial month) the child attended school.
4. Children enroll in preschool for two, three or five days a week. Once a child's schedule is confirmed, changes of schedule and the number of days of the week a child attends in preschool may be made **only once for the school year and only if space allows**. This also applies to the days of the week a child attends. Your request must be submitted at least two weeks before the beginning of any month. If a change is requested later than two weeks before the beginning of

the school year in September, and the change is approved, it will not be implemented until October.

5. If any hourly childcare is used during any given month, there is an administrative fee of \$50 a month for each child in addition to the regular hourly rate.
6. The Elementary School Textbook and Materials Fee may be paid in two payments: the first half is due September 1 and the second half by December 1. The fee may also be paid in full on September 1. There are no refunds for this fee. The Preschool Materials Fee is paid at the beginning of the school year. A \$10 Emergency Fund fee is included in the materials fees.
7. If tuition payments are more than 30 days in arrears, the student's name may be dropped from registration until the account is paid in full.
8. If a tuition payment is returned for insufficient funds, bank fees we incur for processing the payment will be charged to you.
9. The school will give advance notice of 30 days for changes in the fee schedule.

## Parent Cooperation with School Policies, Procedures, and Administrative Requests

In order to assure the effective operation of The Meher Schools, parents are expected to cooperate with school policies, procedures, and reasonable requests made by the administration in the operation of the school. Therefore it is a condition of attending the schools that parents must cooperate with such policies, procedures, and requests.

## Before- and Aftercare Policies

**COVID Change:** Beforecare begins at 8 a.m. Preschool aftercare ends at 5 p.m. Elementary aftercare ends at 5 or 5:30 p.m., depending on the room your child is in.

**COVID Change:** For 2020–21, only monthly (flat rate) daycare is available. Refer to the Fee Schedule.

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The preschool and elementary school daycare programs (before- and aftercare) are open from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Daycare hours you will be billed for include any time before or after these hours:

- Preschool 9–12
  - Kindergarten 8:30–2
  - Grade 1 8–2
  - Grades 2–5 8–2:30
1. In order for daycare to be used on any given day, a student must have attended the regular program on that day. Child care services are *not* available on a “drop-in” basis.

2. Only one change from monthly daycare to hourly or vice versa may be made per school year. This request must be in the Office by the 15th of the month in order to be considered for the following month.
3. Monthly daycare is available to students who attend five days a week. Please refer to your fee schedule to determine which plan is better for your needs. If you choose monthly daycare paid on a flat-fee basis, it is important to give us your exact hours as closely as possible so that we may arrange adequate staff coverage. Additional hours will not be automatically granted once school has begun and staff has been set.
4. Summer sessions are flexible, and you are allowed different enrollments than you selected during the school year. The enrollments do not need to be the same in both sessions, and you do not need to sign up for both sessions.
5. If a student is repeatedly not signed out of aftercare, a penalty will be assessed.
6. If a student is picked up after our closing time, a late fee of \$10 for each 15-minute increment after that is assessed for each of the two teachers present. This means a fee of \$20 for each 15-minute increment or portion thereof. Late fees should be paid *directly* to the teachers as compensation for staying past normal work hours to care for a late child. *Please offer payment promptly so that teachers do not have to ask.* (We reserve the right to double or triple this charge if we feel it necessary to discourage habitual lateness.)
7. Students who normally use childcare services are welcome to register for daycare during the winter and spring breaks and during periods between sessions. A flat fee is charged, and payment must be made in advance. No refunds will be given for changes during these special daycare weeks. There are no reductions in regular fees for months that have special daycare sessions. **These charges are in addition to regular fees.**

## Explorations Classes and Daycare Policy

**COVID Change:** Due to health and safety requirements, in-person Explorations classes will not be offered. The school may be able to offer virtual Explorations classes.

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Students who use aftercare may also wish to sign up for Explorations classes. These are enrichment classes that require an additional enrollment with an additional fee. They are not a substitute for daycare.

**This means that under most circumstances, parents with students enrolled in daycare will be charged for the number of hours the students are on campus in aftercare, including the time spent in Explorations classes. *The only exception to this is children who do not normally use daycare, under the following circumstances:***

1. The Explorations class begins within 15 minutes of when school lets out.
2. **You pick up your child immediately after the Explorations class ends and indicate on the sign-out sheet the time of the class by circling it, writing EXP (for “Explorations”), and initialing the time block in which you are picking up your child.**

**If you do not sign out correctly, you will be automatically charged for aftercare, as are all other parents whose children are on campus at this time. There will be no refunds or credits for parental omission.**

Additionally, **if you do not pick up your child at the end of the Explorations class**, he or she will be checked into aftercare and your daycare bill will automatically reflect the full number of hours your child was on campus after regular school hours, including the time spent in the Explorations class.

**Please note: If an Explorations class starts more than 15 minutes after your child gets out of school** (i.e., 2:15 for kindergarteners and first graders and 2:45 for second through fifth graders) **and your child is not enrolled in daycare, you must pick him or her up immediately after school and bring him or her back for the Explorations class.** If you do not, we become responsible for your child's care and thus must sign him or her into daycare and bill you accordingly—including the time he or she is in the Explorations class. Your daycare fee would be the current hourly daycare rate for the number of hours your child is on campus plus the \$50 monthly administrative fee.

### Curacubby: Pay Tuition and Manage Your Account Online

The Meher Schools uses Curacubby, an online billing and payment service. You may pay tuition from your bank account and manage your invoices from your computer, phone, or tablet. You may also download your invoices and account statements to accommodate your flexible-spending benefit program.

You may still pay by check if you'd prefer, but you'll need to use Curacubby to access your invoices and statements. Please be sure to write your child's first and last names and the word "tuition" or "childcare" on the front of the check.

Your payment transactions and identity are protected by security that meets the highest industry standards.

For help using the Curacubby website, email [support@curacubby.com](mailto:support@curacubby.com). For billing-related questions, contact the school at [billing@meherschools.org](mailto:billing@meherschools.org).

### School Programs and Tuition in Extraordinary Circumstances

In extraordinary circumstances, events beyond the school's control may cause us to close for a period of time or to suspend in-person classes and deliver instruction remotely. Examples of this might be a closure due to a wildfire, earthquake, or pandemic such as COVID-19. If such an event occurs, the school's programs may be suspended or modified until such time as we can safely reopen. In that event, we must continue to pay our staff and operating costs such as rent and utilities, so we need to rely on our families to continue to pay tuition. We will always approach these unknown events with a spirit of collaboration and partnership with our families.

# Donations

Many parents have asked if we can receive donations. We certainly accept and appreciate those that are freely given. Many important projects have been possible because of generous donations. We are a tax-exempt nonprofit educational institution. Donations to The Meher Schools are tax-deductible.

## Smile! An Easy Way to Support the School

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way to support the school at no cost to you. Once you've signed up, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to the school every time you buy an item labeled "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation." The money we raise through AmazonSmile is used to help defray expenses to help keep our tuition as low as possible.

To sign up to support The Meher Schools, go to *smile.amazon.com* and follow the directions. After you're signed up, go to *smile.amazon.com* (rather than *amazon.com*) whenever you want to place an Amazon order, and Amazon will make donations on all eligible purchases automatically.

# Meher Schools Fee Schedule: 2020–21

**Rates for 2020–21 may be adjusted due to new health and safety regulations.**

	Ten Monthly Installments	August–June Tuition and Fees
<b>Tuition and Materials: Preschool</b> <i>9 a.m. to 12 p.m.</i>		
5 days per week (1 child)	\$740	\$7,400
2 or more children attending <i>5 days per week</i>	\$660	\$6,600
3 days per week	\$585	\$5,850
2 days per week	\$480	\$4,800
<b>Preschool Materials Fee (Annual)</b>		\$300
<b>Tuition, Materials, and Book Fees: Elementary</b>		
Kindergarten half day <i>(8:40 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.)</i>	\$760	\$7,600
Kindergarten full day <i>(8:40 a.m. to 2 p.m.)</i> (1 child)	\$890	\$8,900
Kindergarten full day (2+ children in K–5 only)	\$810	\$8,100
Grades 1–5 (1 child)	\$890	\$8,900
Grades 1–5 (2+ children in K–5)	\$810	\$8,100
<b>Elementary Textbook/Materials Fees (Annual)</b>		
Kindergarten		\$340
Grades 1–4		\$520
Grade 5 (includes graduation fee)		\$665
<b>Daycare: Elementary*</b>		
<i>Elementary Full-Time Flat Rates (2/2:30–5:30 p.m.)</i>		
1 child	\$395	\$3,950
2+ children in K–5 program only	\$310	\$3,100
<i>Elementary Part-Time Flat Rates (2/2:30–3:30 p.m.)</i>		
1 child	\$200	\$2,000
2+ children in K–5 program only	\$150	\$1,500
<b>Daycare: Preschool*</b>		
<i>Preschool Full-Time Flat Rates (12–5 p.m.)</i>		
1 child	\$570	\$5,700
2+ children in preschool program only	\$430	\$4,300
<i>Preschool Part-Time Flat Rates (12–2 p.m.)</i>		
1 child	\$360	\$3,600
2+ children in preschool program only	\$300	\$3,000

\* Daycare fees do not apply to daycare weeks for winter and spring vacation or June 7–11 for K–5. A separate flat fee will be charged for each of these extra weeks.

September 17, 2020

# THE MEHER SCHOOLS 2020-2021 CALENDAR

<p><b>7</b> Labor Day</p>	<b>SEPTEMBER 2020</b>	<b>FEBRUARY 2021</b>	<p><b>12, 15</b> Presidents Day weekend <b>No school or daycare</b></p>																																																																																											
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<p><b>11</b> Veterans Day <b>No school or Daycare</b> <b>Staff Development</b></p> <p><b>25-27</b> Thanksgiving <b>No school or daycare</b></p>	<b>NOVEMBER 2020</b>	<b>APRIL 2021</b>	<p><b>5-9</b> Spring daycare <b>(April 5-9)</b></p>																																																																																											
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<p><b>1</b> <b>No school or daycare</b></p> <p><b>4</b> Classes resume</p> <p><b>18</b> Martin Luther King, Jr. Day <b>No school or daycare</b></p>	<b>JANUARY 2021</b>	<b>JUNE 2021</b>	<p><b>4</b> End of elementary year</p> <p><b>11</b> End of preschool year</p> <p><b>7-11</b> Elementary daycare</p> <p><b>14-18</b> <b>No school or daycare</b></p> <p style="font-size: 8px;">Summer dates to be announced</p>																																																																																											
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- Start date
- No school or daycare
- No school; daycare available

- End of elementary year
- End of preschool year; end of elementary daycare

2.

*Health Information*

# Health Guidelines

## COVID Changes: Health Guidelines for the 2020–21 School Year

[Click here for \*Staying Healthy\*, our current health guidelines.](#)

### Required Flu Shot

As part of our health and safety program during the pandemic, all students must have a flu shot. An outbreak of flu could shut down our program temporarily, so we're taking precautions. Parents must submit proof to the Office that their child has received a flu shot by October 15. If your child is allergic to the flu shot, a note from your doctor stating that the child is allergic is required.

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## Personal Protective Equipment

### Students

#### *Preschool*

Preschoolers are asked to wear face masks when they're indoors. Please bring two. Masks will be kept at school, and the teachers will wash them nightly.

#### *Elementary*

##### **A Mask or Face Covering**

Please send your child with a mask or face covering. We require K–5 children to wear masks to participate in in-person instruction. We recommend washing masks daily.

##### **A Water Bottle**

We recommend that each child bring a refillable water bottle to prevent the shared use of drinking fountains. The bottle should be clearly labeled with the child's name and taken home daily for cleaning.

##### **Freshly Laundered Clothes**

We recommend that children wear freshly laundered clothes daily, and that extra layers (such as sweatshirts) not be left on campus overnight.

## Parents/Caregivers and Staff

All adults on campus must wear a mask or face covering.

# General Health Guidelines

Guidelines from the California Department of Health Services and licensing requirements restrict us from allowing a child to attend school if he or she is ill. We ask teachers to do a routine health check each morning. If at any time during the day a teacher feels that your child is too ill to stay at school, we'll notify you and ask that you pick up your child immediately. It's up to the teacher to determine whether a child is able to stay at school. Our licensing agency requires parents to pick up sick children within one hour. *It's essential that working parents arrange in advance to have one or more back-up caregivers in case they're unable to stay home from work or can't leave work to pick up a child.* (See "[Information/Emergency Form—Changes and Updates](#)" in part 1.)

It's important that you be aware of school health guidelines and reporting requirements from the Department of Health. It's also important that you be thoroughly familiar with symptoms that restrict a child from attending school, and when a child may return to school after an illness. For these reasons, we have created these health and illness guidelines. Please read them carefully. We recommend that you keep these pages handy to refer to as illnesses occur.

***Please keep us well informed about all aspects of your child's health.***

On the Information/Emergency Form, you'll find a section for special health notes. If your child has allergic reactions to any foods or other substances, bee stings, etc., or has other health conditions, these must be noted on his or her form. If the condition is life threatening, please fill out a Life-Threatening Medical Alert form, which is available in the Office.

This information is kept on file in the Office and is also communicated to your child's teachers. Please let us know about any changes in your child's medical information by updating your Information/Emergency Form. We may ask you for even more detailed information, which will help us to better care for your child. *We also ask that you keep this information updated throughout the year.* It's helpful for us to know about anything that might affect your child's well-being or performance at school.

## Special Health Needs and Referrals

Please let the school office and your child's teacher(s) know if your child requires glasses, has a hearing loss, or has any other physical condition that requires special attention. It's helpful to your child if new information is shared with the school as it becomes available. Let us know of any allergies so that we don't mistake those symptoms (sneezing, wheezing, watery eyes) for symptoms of contagion.

It's in your child's best interest to have a yearly check-up, especially if he or she is under seven years old. *A physical examination is required by state law before entering preschool, kindergarten, and first grade.* If your child has persistent health problems and you would like a referral to a physician or other health professional, please contact the preschool director or an elementary school co-principal.

If your child has had a speech-and-language evaluation or any other outside assessment or evaluation, be sure that the Office has a copy of the report for our files. This information should also be shared with your child’s teacher and the preschool director or an elementary co-principal.

## Medications at School

*It is against the law for schools to administer medications to children without legal permission from parents and physicians.* Your signature is required by law in order for us to administer medications. If your child is in need of medication at school, please complete a Permission to Give Medication form, which you’ll find in the Office.

When you bring medication to school, you must personally hand it to an appropriate staff person. See specific instructions for the preschool and elementary school below. We’re required to have the container with the prescription on it. If the medication is to be administered both at school and at home, you can ask your physician to have the prescription divided between two containers.

Please note that non-prescription medicines such as Tylenol and cough medicine cannot be authorized on an “as-needed” basis; they can only be given with written permission for the duration of an illness. If an illness is chronic, as-needed non-prescription medication may be kept in the child’s classroom for the school year with parent and doctor signatures.

Please note that *it is against California state law to send medication of any kind to school with your child.* Never leave medication in your child’s basket, backpack, or lunchbox. This includes over-the-counter medicines and items such as cough drops. (The only exception to this rule is fourth and fifth grade children who need inhalers for asthma. In this case, you may sign a release form in the Office to give permission for an inhaler to be kept in your child’s backpack for easy access.)

### *Preschool*

If your preschool child must be given medicine at school, please write instructions on the Permission to Give Medication chart that’s posted on the classroom refrigerator, and sign your name. *The form must be signed every day that your child requires medication.* If you forget to sign and we can’t get in touch with you, we won’t be able to give your child the medication.

It’s difficult to administer medicines at school. We can only give medicines twice a day—once at 12:45 p.m. and once at 3 p.m. Physicians often accommodate the needs of children in daycare by prescribing medicines that require only one or two doses a day. Children may be in different classrooms in the afternoon. Check with your child’s teacher about the current procedure for informing aftercare staff. Please notify the teacher if your child is taking any medication at home since it might have an effect on his or her behavior or appetite.

### *Elementary School*

**COVID Change:** Medications for elementary students are now stored in their classroom and administered by their teachers.

If your child needs prescription medication and requires that a dose be given at school, please pick up a Permission to Give Medication form from the Office. Be sure to complete it carefully, sign it, then return to the Office. The prescription must be on the container. For elementary students who have life-threatening medical conditions, we ask that you provide us with two sets of medication: one for the classroom and one for the Office.

## Injuries at School

For any serious injury, we will follow your instructions on your child's Information/Emergency Form. *It is critical that you keep your Information/Emergency Form updated.*

For elementary students, Band-Aids, ice packs, and comfort for minor mishaps are available in the classrooms. Please let the Office know if your child requires a follow-up visit to the doctor and about the outcome of the visit.

In the preschool, look in your child's folder for "Owie Notes" reporting minor injuries. Teachers will call you if your child may need to see a physician.

For any serious injury, we'll follow your instructions on your child's Information/Emergency Form. In the event of an emergency, we'll call 911. Parents/guardians will be notified in the event of a serious injury. Preschool parents will receive a copy of the school's Medical Incident Report (a licensing requirement) once the teacher has complete information. If you visit a doctor to follow up on an injury that occurred at school, please let your child's teacher know.

## Illness, Absences, and Homework

**Informing the school of absences.** If your child is going to be absent from school for any reason, please phone the Office at (925) 938-9958 and leave a message on the attendance line. The Office will notify the classroom teacher.

If your child is ill, please let us know the nature of the illness when you call. It's especially important to let us know if your child has a contagious illness. We're required to report certain illnesses—such as measles, hepatitis, meningitis, and streptococcal infections—to the health department.

**COVID Change:** Contact your child's teachers directly regarding homework or missing classwork. Homework materials may be picked up from the Homework Pick-up Box in the Office (mounted on the wall to your immediate left when you enter).

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If your child is ill, please request homework when you call the Office. The teachers will provide a homework packet with instructions and assignments. These packets may be picked up from the Homework Pick-up Box in the Office (the bottom of the three "wall pockets" to your immediate left as you enter the room) after 2:30. In order for the message to reach the teachers in a timely fashion, all homework requests must be made before 10:15.

Though we discourage the families of elementary school children from taking vacations during the academic year, we know that sometimes travel is unavoidable. If your child will be absent for a prolonged period, please contact the teachers at least a week in advance to arrange for homework. Keeping up with homework assignments will help ensure that your child doesn't fall far behind in his or her school work.

## Health Screenings

The Meher Schools occasionally offers hearing, speech-and-language, and vision screenings and sensory-motor evaluations. We'll notify you when these are scheduled.

## Student Accident Insurance

The school carries student accident insurance for each child. This insurance provides coverage if your child is uninsured, and it provides supplemental coverage to 100 percent if your child is already insured. If your child is injured on the school grounds and requires medical or dental treatment, please contact the Office if you wish to have information about this insurance. The school must be notified and forms must be filled out within 72 hours of an accident.

# California Department of Health Services Illness Guidelines

*(Please keep on hand for reference during the year)*

**COVID Change:** See “Health Guidelines for the 2020–21 School Year,” above.

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All young children must experience a variety of illnesses in order to develop strong immune systems that will help them fight off serious infections later in life. California Department of Health Services guidelines and licensing requirements require that children be restricted from attending school while ill. Please keep your child home from school in the morning if you feel that he or she looks unwell, has a fever, refuses food, has a significant cough, has sudden onset of vomiting or diarrhea, appears listless, or has had these symptoms in the last 24 hours. If you are unsure whether your child should be at school, please ask a teacher.

The absence of fever does *not* guarantee that a child is well—strep throat and ear infections are only rarely accompanied by fever.

## Symptoms That Restrict a Child From Attending School

Contagion— overt signs	Non-healing sores (impetigo, Herpes simplex), conjunctivitis, etc.
Cough	Persistent, painful, interfering with appetite or activity; sudden wheezing or shortness of breath
Ears and throat	Sudden pain, especially associated with poor appetite
Eyes	Colored discharge (“pink eye”) or persistent redness or pain in one eye (may indicate serious eye injury)
Fever	Oral temperature over 99.6° or the reading that is defined as a fever in the directions for your thermometer

Headache	Persistent, despite lying down; often precedes other symptoms of infection
Head lice	Lice or lice eggs (“nits”) on the scalp
Injury	To head or extremities, where behavior or function is obviously abnormal; initial loss of consciousness with a fall usually indicates a concussion
Nasal discharge	Thick, yellow or green, suddenly appearing <i>after</i> at least seven days of “innocent” cold symptoms
Persistent discomfort	Itching, abdominal pain, or headache, severe enough to prevent a child from participating in school activities
Rash	Generalized, suddenly appearing, especially if associated with irritability or cold symptoms (especially a sore throat)
Stomach	More than one episode of vomiting, debilitating stomach pain, sudden onset of diarrhea
Urination	Painful or burning, even if not contagious (the child’s discomfort may be distressing to other students and/or staff)

## Returning to School After an Illness

**COVID Change:** A child or staff member with COVID symptoms may not return to school until they meet [CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation](#), in addition to local public health standards. See “Health Guidelines: COVID Changes” for additional criteria for the 2020–21 school year.

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Children should return to school when their disposition and rhythms of eating and sleeping are returning to normal, and when they’re able to participate in the normal daily routine of the class. Occasional (“controllable”) cough, nasal discharge, and infrequent loose stools are not disqualifying conditions. Generally, a child is ready to return to class

- *After 24 hours without a fever or vomiting*
- After rapid clinical improvement from a bacterial illness because of antibiotic therapy, such as for strep throat or an ear infection
- After signs of noticeable improvement, with or without medication.

**According to county health department guidelines, a child should not return to school following an illness until he or she has had a full day of normal health (including a full day of normal temperature) and normal activity at home.** If you bring your child back to school before this prescribed time, we will call you to pick the child up and take him or her home. If this presents problems at work, please be certain to have a childcare person ready to cover for you in such circumstances.

Please note the details listed below for recovery from certain specific illnesses.

Relapses in childhood illnesses are frequent. You may be asked to take your child home if significant symptoms reoccur. It’s helpful to keep in mind that if a child doesn’t “look right,” generally he or she isn’t well and therefore should delay returning to school.

Any specific restriction of diet or activity following an illness should be discussed with your child's teacher.

## Recovery Indicators for Specific Illnesses

Bronchitis, pneumonia, "croup"	Cough no longer interfering with routine daily activities
Chicken pox	Dark centers ("scabs") in all lesions with no new lesions appearing (usually six to seven days after a rash appears); if a child has been vaccinated against chickenpox, a secondary infection will be much more mild and brief, and a return to school in two to five days is okay
Conjunctivitis ("pink eye")	Eyes no longer red or draining, or on antibiotics for 24–48 hours (relapses occur frequently)
Coxsackie virus ("hand, foot, and mouth disease")	Rash and blisters on hands, feet, mouth, and legs must be dried up; a child must stay home until he or she has had one day of normal health and activity at home
Diarrhea	Disposition and energy level returning to normal; pain absent (child should be on a modified diet until he or she has fewer than three stools per day)
Giardia	Health department requires exclusion from school until medication is complete and a negative stool test is obtained
Head lice	When child is lice- and nit-free; please see the guidelines posted on your child's classroom door during the outbreak for details
Impetigo	All lesions drying with firm scab and no new lesions appearing
Poison oak	Need not be excluded from school
Scabies	When rash is fading
Sore throat or ear infection	Child is no longer in pain; appetite and sleep becoming normal; if the child is on medication, please give <i>full course</i> of medication as recommended by physician if doses remain after child returns to school
Significant injury	According to specific guidelines of your physician; please inform the school <i>in writing</i> of activity restrictions.
Viral illness with rash (roseola, German measles, etc.)	24 hours without fever, with rash fading

## Notice of Pesticide Spraying

The Healthy Schools Act of 2000 requires all California public and private preschools and child daycare facilities to notify parents and guardians of pesticides they expect to apply during the year. We will post signs 24 hours before and 72 hours after the application of any pesticide. To be notified individually when we're going to apply pesticide, complete the form on the second page following. You can [download our plan](#) from the Parent Resource Center.

You can find more information regarding pesticide and pesticide-use reduction at the Department of Pesticide Regulation's website, [www.cdpr.ca.gov](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov). If you have any questions, please contact our safety officers, Ivy Summers ([ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org)) or Vince d'Assis ([vince@meher.schools.org](mailto:vince@meher.schools.org)).

## Lead Safety for Renovations, Repairs, and Painting

The Meher Schools is an EPA-certified Lead-Safe Firm. Our facilities coordinator, Benedict Clark, has completed Lead Renovator Training and is a certified EPA Lead Renovator.

If there is lead-based paint on our walls, it is under many layers of latex paint. As a rule, the school does not disturb painted surfaces. From time to time, it's necessary to do repairs or painting that might disturb existing lead paint. When we do, we observe all relevant EPA regulations.

We'll notify parents any time planned maintenance work that's covered under EPA regulations might disturb underlying lead paint.

Learn more in the EPA's publication *The Lead-Safe Certified Guide to Renovate Right*, which is available at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/renovaterightbrochure.pdf>.

## Emergency Preparedness Plan

The Meher Schools annually updates its Emergency Preparedness Plan, which details school-wide procedures for disaster drills and disasters. A copy of the plan is kept in the Office for review by members of the school community.

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# Pesticide Application Notification

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Healthy Schools Act of 2000 (as amended by Assembly Bill 2865, Chapter 865, Statutes of 2006) requires that all schools and child daycare centers provide parents or guardians of children who are enrolled at the facility with annual written notice of expected pesticide use at the school or daycare center. The notification identifies the active ingredient or ingredients in each pesticide product. Visit the Department of Pesticide Regulation's School Integrated Pest Management Website (<http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/schoolipm/>) for further information on pesticides and their alternatives.

Parents or guardians may request prior notification of individual pesticide applications at The Meher Schools. People listed in this registry will be notified at least 72 hours before pesticides are applied. If you would like to be notified before a pesticide is applied, please complete the form below and return it to the Office.

If you have questions, please contact School Safety Officers Ivy Summers ([ivy@meher.schools.org](mailto:ivy@meher.schools.org)) or Vince d'Assis ([vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org)).

*The Meher Schools*

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## *Request for Individual Pesticide Application Notification*

### The Meher Schools

I understand that, upon request, The Meher Schools will provide information about individual pesticide application at least 72 hours before application. I would like to be notified before each pesticide application at the school.

Please print neatly:

Name of parent/guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) names \_\_\_\_\_

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3.

*General Interest Information*

## Welcome to the Office!

**Location:** Tier 1

**Hours:** Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

**Phone:** (925) 938-9958

The phone is answered in the Office during office hours Monday through Friday.

### The “New” Office

**COVID Changes:** In an effort to minimize the Office staff’s exposure to communicable diseases, we’ve made some changes in the way the Office is organized and used. The Office is open during its regular hours, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Please observe these new guidelines:

- One parent or teacher at a time is allowed in the Office.
- Line up six feet apart outside the Office when waiting to enter.
- Office guests cannot go past the reception desk.
- **Fill out forms before going into the Office.**
  - You’re welcome to call the Office to request forms or other information ahead of your visit to the Office. Most forms are also available in the Parent Resource Center ([meherschoolsparents.org](http://meherschoolsparents.org)).
  - We will digitize as many forms as possible, minimizing the need to come to the Office.

**COVID Change:** Unfortunately, the Office is no longer able to serve extra food to children who finish their lunch and are still hungry. Please pack some extra food so children will have all they need in their lunch, even on a day when they are particularly hungry.

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While there’s almost always someone available in the Office to answer your questions, most business that’s conducted in the Office consists of dropping off forms or checks and picking up forms and materials left for parents by a teacher or the Office. In most cases these are things parents can do without assistance. If you need help, though, please ask!

**Dropping things off.** If you just need to drop off a check, a form, a note for a staff member, etc., please place it in the wall pocket labeled Office Drop Box, located on the wall to your immediate left as you enter the Office. We’ll make sure it gets to the right person.

**Picking up materials from the administration or a teacher.** If you’re coming to pick up something from the school like a form to be signed, you’ll find it in the wall pocket underneath the Office Drop Box labeled Office Pick-up Box. (Once you’ve signed a form or provided information we’ve requested, you can leave it in the Office Drop Box.) Materials left by teachers will be in the Homework Pick-up Box, below the Office Pick-up Box.

**Picking up forms.** Please ask the receptionist for forms. Most of the forms parents ask for most often can also be found on the [Office Forms](#) page of the Parent Resource Center.

☞ We can always use volunteers in the Office. Volunteers serve as receptionists and help with special projects. If you'd like to help, please let us know by checking the appropriate box on the Parent Participation form or by leaving a note in the Office Drop Box!

## Identification Badges

For the safety of your children, all teachers and parents are asked to wear name badges. Badges for new parents are available for pick-up in the Office on the child's first day of school. If you lose your badge, please submit an ID Badge Request Form. [Download the form here](#) from the Parent Resource Center or pick one up in the Office.

*Visitors need to come to the Office to get a visitor badge.*

## Parking Guidelines

COVID Change: **Drop-off and pick-up will take longer than usual.** See Section V for details about dropping off and picking up during the pandemic.

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Our parking plan was created to make dropping off and picking up children less of a challenge. The plan includes designated parking spaces for parents and preschool teachers in the lower lot and reserving the upper (third-tier) lot for elementary teachers. There's a space in the lower lot for parents who are dropping off or picking up children without parking and two for those who will be on campus for five minutes or less. The Office (second-tier) lot is reserved for administrative staff and delivery and emergency vehicles. (See the map on the next page.)

We ask that parents use the steps rather than the driveway to the Office lot to come onto campus. But if you have a stroller and need to walk up the driveway, please walk in the diagonally striped area next to the building.

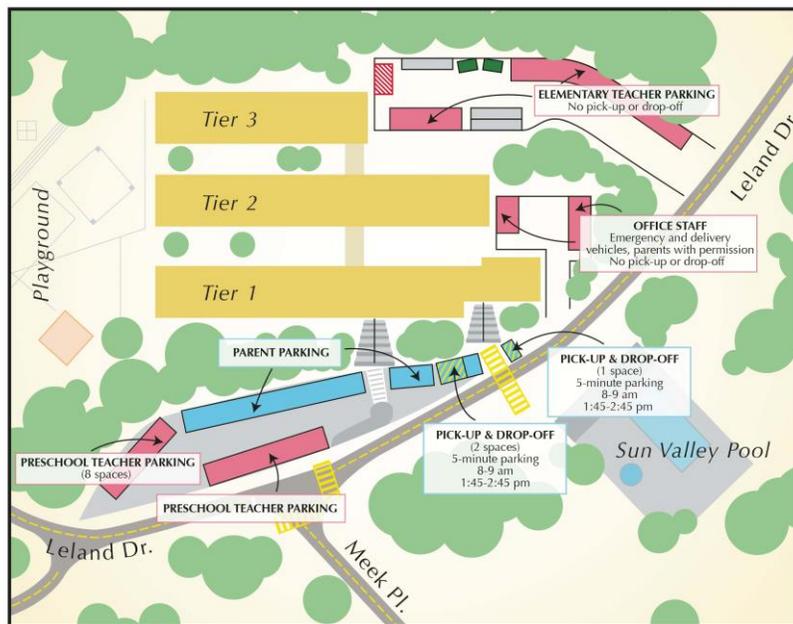
Parents are asked to honor the parking plan at all times. However, after 4 p.m., elementary parents may park in the upper lot. During the winter after dark, parents are welcome to use the Office lot as well.

If you have questions about the parking plan or have mobility challenges that require accommodations, please contact the Office.

### *Important reminders*

- Watch for children at all times when driving in the parking lot, especially when backing up and near crosswalks.
- Remember that it's not only illegal but unsafe to leave young children unattended in parked cars while you drop off or pick up other children.
- Don't leave your purse or other valuables where they're visible in your car.

- Please don't sit in your car in the parking lot to check messages or return calls after dropping your child off. Parking spaces are at a premium in the morning. Move to an off-campus location, such as along Leland Drive.



## Clothing and Footwear

**Appropriate clothing.** Although we don't require uniforms, we do ask that you not let your child come to school wearing clothing with scary or violent graphics or offensive text. In the preschool, this includes superhero costumes and all images of superheroes. We've found that these restrict creativity and promote aggressive play. Also, we ask that students not wear clothing that exposes their midriffs and that shorts be mid-thigh or longer. Shirts must have straps or sleeves (no "tube tops"). (See "[Clothing and Supplies](#)" in part 7 for details about clothing for preschoolers.)

**Layers for temperature shifts.** The weather is changeable. It's helpful to send labeled clothes such as sweaters to accommodate shifts in temperature. Days that begin chilly sometimes end up warm, and warm days may turn cool. It's best to be prepared for all possibilities.

**Safe footwear.** Slippery sandals, party shoes, flip-flops, and cowboy boots can be hazardous in wet weather and on climbing structures, nature walks, and the playground, and during P.E. Appropriate footwear geared to your child's safety and comfort is necessary.

## Backpacks

Many children in Grades 3–5 carry their belongings in backpacks. (We provide book bags for students in kindergarten and first grade.) Since children are not asked to carry heavy books back and forth, we ask that your child uses a regular backpack rather than one on rollers. Roller backpacks are cumbersome, and people can trip over them in the halls. There is limited space to store them in the classrooms. Your child's backpack should be large enough to hold a binder.

## Lunches

**COVID Change:** The Office is no longer able to provide extra food for children who don't have enough to eat at lunchtime. Please be sure your child has enough food for snacks and lunch.

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Children in the elementary school and preschoolers who stay for aftercare bring lunches prepared at home. Most parents find plastic or cloth lunch boxes to be the most practical. Oversized lunch boxes are unnecessary and difficult to store. Be sure your child's lunch box is clearly labeled with his or her name and room number.

Children of all ages enjoy sandwiches, sliced vegetables, fruit, and water, juice, or milk. Please be sure to provide a source of protein. A frozen juice pack or frozen water in the lunch box that defrosts by lunchtime both provides a cold drink and keeps perishables fresh until they're eaten. Please don't send food that requires heating in a microwave or that requires boiling water. And please don't send soft drinks or glass bottles.

Under certain circumstances, we may ask parents to avoid bringing specific allergens on a class-by-class basis. Our is not a nut-free school, though we don't include them in snacks we make for the children.

## School Supplies

The school provides "consumable" supplies (such as binders, binder paper, art paper, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, rulers, and erasers), calculators, and dictionaries.

### Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs)

The SLOs (schoolwide learner outcomes) are our learning goals and expectations for all students and staff. These goals guide our academic and behavioral instruction. We ask our teachers and staff to model these principles in daily life in the classroom so that the SLOs become a foundation for the culture at school. The SLOs, in their simple form, are to

- Practice kindness, respect, tolerance, and cooperation
- Be open to new learning
- Try your best
- Express and value yourself through the arts.

## Toys and Other Treasures from Home

Our school policy is that toys should not be brought to school. We cannot be responsible for personal items brought to or left at school.

While it may be hard to convince your child to leave a toy at home, toys brought to school create many problems. They cause conflicts on the play yard or playground and often get lost or broken. We rely on parents to be aware of what children bring to school in their pockets or backpacks. It's awkward for teachers to insist that a child part with a toy if a parent has allowed him or her to bring it. We also ask that children not bring money, candy, make-up, or other treasures from home.

Students in Grades 1–5 are permitted to bring their own baseball gloves to use during recess and P.E. Baseball gloves may not be shared, and the school is not responsible for damage or loss. No other personal sports equipment is permitted.

Preschool children may bring a “lovie” to school for nap or rest time.

## Therapeutic Tools

Therapeutic items such as weighted geckos, sit-and-move cushions, and other sensory tools that are owned by children and used in the classroom should remain in the classroom during the school day and be put in their bags during aftercare, so they don't get ruined or lost.

## Cell Phones and Other Electronics at School

**COVID Change:** Children are not allowed to use cell phones at school. In previous school years, children were not permitted to bring tablets, laptops, or other electronic devices. This year we're piloting the use of devices for distance learning in the elementary school. Elementary parents will receive an email regarding our Student Acceptable Use of Technology policy for this pilot program.

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Children are not allowed to use cell phones at school except by special arrangement between parents and the administration, as in the case of a life-threatening medical condition. The school is not liable for any loss or damage to any electronic device brought to school.

Students who have cell phones for after-school off-campus activities must keep them turned off and in their backpacks while at school. If a cell phone is seen or heard, it will be taken from the student and kept in the Office for the parents to pick up.

Students in Grades 2–5 may turn on their cell phones at the front steps at 2:30 only, in case their parents contact them about changes in pick-up plans. Students may not play games on their phones at any time.

Students are not permitted to bring other electronic devices to school. This includes smart watches, iPods and other media players, laptops, tablets, e-readers, and videogame devices.

## Weapons and Illicit Substances

*At The Meher Schools, there is zero tolerance for weapons and illicit substances.*

These policies are designed to ensure the safety of those attending and employed at the school and to provide an appropriate learning environment for all students. There can be no acceptable reason for violation of these policies.

## *Weapons*

Weapons include guns, BB guns, look-alike guns, knives, and any object that may be used in a threatening or harmful manner. No student may have or use a weapon on campus, coming to or going from school, or at any school activity. This includes having them in their backpacks. There is no acceptable reason for bringing any weapon to school. Students who intentionally violate this policy will be suspended and may be expelled, depending on the results of an investigation.

## *Illicit Substances*

Students may not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages, controlled substances such as illegal drugs, or any other substance that could endanger students or others or reflect negatively on the students or the school while at school or participating in school activities. The parents of any student suspected of using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will be contacted immediately and asked to meet with a safety officer.

No student may use, carry, or sell tobacco products while on the school premises or at school events. Students violating this policy will be suspended and may ultimately be expelled if the behavior is not corrected.

## **Violent and Threatening Acts**

*Physical violence of any kind is not allowed at the school.* Students are not permitted to threaten the life, safety, or well-being of anyone. The school's physical and social/verbal aggression policies are outlined in "[School Safety Program](#)."

## **Birthdays and Special Holidays**

We like to honor each child's birthday. Each classroom has a different and lovely way to honor birthdays. Some celebrate all birthdays for the month on one day. Please check with your child's teachers to find out how birthdays are observed in their room.

Because of many dietary restrictions, we ask that you not send treats to celebrate your child's birthday. We have many children who are severely allergic and others who don't do well with sugar. Our children have become accustomed to our "no birthday treats" policy.

If families elect to hold birthday parties outside of school, we ask that invitations not be passed out or discussed at school, to avoid feelings of hurt and exclusion.

**COVID Change:** We expect families at our school to abide by state and local social distancing requirements and not gather for events such as birthday parties outside of school.

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Sometimes families have special holidays they like to share with the children at school. Please talk with your child's teachers to arrange these celebrations.

## Guidelines for Using the Children's Garden

**COVID Change:** The Children's (or Butterfly) Garden in front of the school is closed until further notice due to the pandemic and renovations.

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The Children's Garden is the garden in front of the school, below Rooms 3, 4, and 5. Generations of parents have enjoyed spending quiet time there with their children at the end of the day. Being in the garden with your child is an opportunity to model care and respect for nature. Please help us keep this space beautiful by observing—and ensuring that your child observes—these guidelines:

- Children need to be in view of and closely supervised by an adult while in the garden. If you can't see your child, please move to a spot where you can.
- The flowers are there for everyone to enjoy. Please don't pick them.
- Take care not to step on plants.
- Don't move rocks in the garden or stream.
- Children may not play with sticks, climb trees, or play tag or other running games in the garden.

If you've never been in the garden, we hope you'll find time to visit. It's a very special place. Thank you for helping us keep it that way!

## Field Trips (Grades 3–5)

**COVID Change:** Field trips are suspended until further notice.

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Students in Grades 3–5 go on several field trips each year. Teachers will provide information about field trips as early in the year as possible. Permission slips are sent to parents as e-mail attachments two to three weeks before each trip. Parents may apply to chaperone, and a lottery is held to select chaperones if needed. Students are not permitted to bring electronic devices of any kind on field trips.

## The School Library

**COVID Update:** The Library is currently closed.

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Elementary school students visit the school Library every week. There they're introduced to library skills, and the upper grades use the facilities for research projects. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade may check out books for classroom use, and first through fifth graders may take books home with signed parental permission. The Library offers a broad

range of both fiction and non-fiction reading material, from beginning readers to young adult. We encourage children to treat books with care and respect and to return them when they're due.

## Lost & Found

Please check frequently for lost items. ***Be sure to label all clothing and personal belongings.*** Labeled items are more likely to be returned if they become separated from their owners. Unclaimed items in Lost & Found are donated to charitable organizations.

Items such as keys, jewelry, glasses, cell phones, and money are kept in the Office Lost & Found.

**Preschool.** There is a Lost & Found area for each classroom. If your child is in Room 5 at the end of the day, please check there as well.

**Kindergarten.** Lost & Found items for kindergarten may be found in front of the kindergarten classrooms or in the elementary Lost & Found cabinet on the third tier.

**Grades 1–5.** Lost & Found is on the third tier in the closed cabinets to the left of Room 16.

## Tutoring

Please ask your child's teacher or an elementary school co-principal about after-school tutoring for your child.

## Parenting Resources

**COVID Update:** The Library is currently closed.

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Our Library holds a small collection of books on parenting that parents of our students may check out. The preschool director and Elementary Co-Principals also have collections of helpful books on all aspects of child development that parents may borrow..

## Meher Schools Leadership Team Structure

At The Meher Schools, we understand the importance of modeling the behaviors we expect our students to learn. Of central importance at our school is our focus on collaboration rather than competition. The most evident demonstration of this is in classrooms, where we practice team teaching. It's natural that the administration of the school be based on collaborative teams.

This team structure provides a leadership model based on mutual respect, shared responsibility, and accountability. Each team member comes with different experiences and a different lens that provides a more reliable foundation for decision making. By learning to work together in this way, the administration sets the tone and the environment for the school.

All teams are charged with 1) aligning the school programs with the school vision and purpose, 2) supporting the achievement of schoolwide learner outcomes (SLOs), 3) supporting the

Western Association for Schools and Colleges accreditation process, and 4) communicating back to their specific groups. These are the teams:

**Strategic Leadership Team (SLT):** Composed of the board of directors and Administrative Team, the SLT is a policy-making and strategic-planning team. It sets tuitions, reviews the budget, approves salaries, and ensures that resources are used to achieve the student learning outcomes.

**Administrative Team (AT):** Consisting of the preschool director, elementary school co-principals, and chief financial officer, the AT is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school at a more detailed level and provides a vehicle for full collaboration between the preschool and the elementary programs.

**Preschool Leadership Team (PLT):** Made up of the preschool director and teachers from each of the five preschool classes, the PLT works collaboratively on issues related to the preschool.

**Elementary Leadership Team (ELT):** Composed of the elementary school co-principals and representatives from grade-level classrooms, the ELT works together on matters pertaining to the elementary school.

We encourage parents to first contact their child's teachers or an administrator regarding any concerns or ideas they might have. The issue or idea can also be brought to a team for discussion by contacting any member of that team.

## Community Service and The Meher Schools

The Meher Schools actively participates in service projects that involve staff, students, and parents. Every fall we take part in the holiday food drive for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. Individual classes in our elementary school sometimes have bake sales and other types of fundraisers for organizations that provide shelter for the homeless, rehabilitate injured animals, work to protect the rainforest, and engage in similar worthy causes.

In addition, a number of our staff members and parents are involved in these programs, which serve those living on the margins of society:

☞ **White Pony Express Food Rescue**

☞ **White Pony Express General Store**

Visit *WhitePonyExpress.org* to learn more about these programs.

☞ **Francis in the Schools** (*francisintheschools.org*)

Offered at no cost to recipients, these programs are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, and donations to them are tax-deductible. If you know of a business or manufacturer that would donate to these programs, please contact Vince d'Assis (*vince@meher schools.org*).



4.

*Communication and  
Parent Participation*

# Communication

Good two-way communication between the administration and parents and teachers and parents is a high priority for us, as we know it is for you.

## School-to-Parent Communication

### Wednesday Messages *and* eNotes

**Wednesday Messages.** This weekly email newsletter is our primary source of regular communication with families. *There are times that important information is conveyed only through* Wednesday Messages. To make this an effective means of communication, it is essential that all families read the newsletter every week.

**eNotes.** We often supplement *Wednesday Messages* with *eNotes*, which we e-mail to all parents. When we send *eNotes*, it's sometimes to communicate timely information that isn't being imparted in any other way or reminders about impending deadlines. We also distribute the *Parent Handbook*, calendars, fee schedules, and other documents as *eNotes* attachments. Please add *eNotes* to your e-mail contact list so our mailings won't end up in your spam folder, and be sure we have your current e-mail address.

### *Parent Resource Center*

The Parent Resource Center is a one-stop online destination for information and materials Meher Schools parents most often request. There you'll find current deadlines and other important dates, calendars, handbooks, and most of the forms parents come to the Office for. Visit the Resource Center at [MeherSchoolsParents.org](http://MeherSchoolsParents.org), or scan this QR code with your phone:



### *School Website*

The school's "public" website is located at [www.meherschools.org](http://www.meherschools.org).

### *Preschool Folders*

**COVID Change:** Your child's teachers will communicate with you about how to pick up materials normally found in children's folders.

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There is a crate that holds a folder for every child located in the hallway outside the child's room. In it you will find special messages from teachers, notices from the Office, and your child's daily work. Please check your child's folder every day.

## *Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences and Progress Reports*

Two parent-teacher conferences and three written progress reports (report cards) are scheduled during the school year for Grades 1–5. Kindergarten parents receive two progress reports and have two conferences each year, in December and May/June. The parents of students in Grades 1–5 receive progress reports in December, February/March, and May/June and have conferences in December and March. We notify parents via *eNote* of the dates for conferences; sign-ups take place online. Of course, parents are encouraged to stay in close touch with their children’s teachers throughout the year.

### *Back-to-School Night*

**COVID Change:** Back-to-School Night is held via Zoom during the pandemic.

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Each fall elementary teachers welcome parents to visit their classrooms and learn more about the curriculum during a Back-to-School Night. We try to hold these events as early in the school year as possible, in September or early October. We’ll inform you by e-mail of the date and time of the gathering in your child’s classroom.

## Parent-to-School Communication

**COVID Change:** Parents are encouraged to be in regular communication with their children’s teachers during distance learning.

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It’s helpful for parents to keep teachers up to date about issues in their children’s lives that could affect their happiness and sense of well-being. Teachers are better able to support children when they’re aware of life changes they’re dealing with. We encourage parents to share this type of information with their child’s teachers to the extent that they feel comfortable. We ask parents to provide updated information about the family on forms each fall, but life changes can occur at all times of the year.

Here are some examples of things you’ll want to share with your child’s teacher:

- Your child has had a difficult morning or is anxious about coming to school.
- Your child’s eating patterns have changed.
- There will be or has been a birth in the family.
- There is or has been an illness, hospitalization, or death in the family.
- A family pet dies.
- There has been or will be a separation or divorce in the family.
- A parent loses his or her job.
- You or your spouse will be traveling.
- You’re having visitors for an extended period.
- You’re remodeling your house or moving.
- You or your spouse are working longer hours.

- There are special health-related needs, such as wearing a hat while outdoors, restricted water play, etc. (However, if a child is too sick to go outside, he or she should remain at home for the day.)

Here are examples of things to tell the Office as well as your child’s teacher:

- Your child will be absent due to illness or vacation. Please let us know the nature of any illness when you call. Please request homework at that time. (See “[Illness, Absence, and Homework](#)” in part 2 for details.)

- Someone not listed on your Information/Emergency Form will pick up your child. We cannot release your child to anyone who is not on this form without your permission. (See “[People Authorized to Pick Up Your Child](#)” in part 5.)

- You (or someone else) be picking your child up at an unusual time.

- There’s new medical information we need to know about, such as a newly discovered allergy.

Information may be communicated in person, by phone, or through e-mail. Members of a teaching team may share relevant information from parent e-mails with other staff members who interact with that child.

**Confidential information.** If you choose to share information you consider confidential with one staff member and don’t want shared it with other staff, please mark the e-mail “confidential.” For example, if a parent will be undergoing surgery but hasn’t yet told the child, the parent might ask a teacher to keep the information confidential for the time being.

For confidential information, please be mindful that e-mail isn’t the most secure or private means of communication. Discussing sensitive topics in person is often preferable. Confidential legal documents shared with the school are kept in a locked cabinet.

As “mandated reporters,” school staff are required by law to share certain types of information with authorities for the sake of a child’s welfare. Please talk to Ivy Summers or Vince d’Assis, our school safety officers, if you have questions about this topic.

## Talking With Teachers and Staff

### *Preschool*

**COVID Change:** Except for brief exchanges when dropping off or pickup up their children, parents’ communication with teachers will be via phone or teleconference. Parents connect with their children’s teachers in the morning when dropping their children off.

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We encourage you to stay in contact with your child’s teacher on a regular basis. Please be certain to make personal contact with one of your child’s teachers—by actually handing off your child and saying hello or goodbye each time you drop off or pick up your child—so that we’re aware the child has arrived or is about to leave.

For parents who bring children to school during beforecare prior to the arrival of the regular contact teachers, or who pick children up after these teachers have left, communication with the regular can be more challenging. One solution is to leave a note for the teacher in your child’s classroom. Another is to call the Office and leave a message asking your child’s teacher to call you. You may request a meeting with your child’s teacher.

For more in-depth discussions, parents are invited to ask for a conference with teachers or administrators any time during the year. Teachers may also request a conference with parents when sharing information between school and home seems especially important.

At the pre-school age level, there are many ways of getting to know children and observe their growth. Along with daily observation, teachers sometimes find it helpful to use formal and informal assessment tools in the classroom. Preschool teachers may use an observational tool like the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), or the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment to prepare for a parent meeting or simply to expand their understanding of different domains of a child's development in order to individualize the curriculum.

The preschool director, Susie Kohl, is also happy to speak with you on the phone to discuss classroom concerns or developmental issues. Email her at [susie@meherschools.org](mailto:susie@meherschools.org) or leave a message for her in the Office.

### *Elementary*

**COVID Change:** Except for brief exchanges when dropping off or pickup up their children, parents' communication with teachers will be via phone or teleconference.

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Early in the year, you'll receive via e-mail a letter from your child's teachers outlining the best ways to contact them. This varies from teacher to teacher. You can always leave a note for a teacher in the Office Drop Box, which we'll be happy to forward to her or him. Be sure to include the topic you wish to discuss, your phone number, and times that are convenient for a teacher to contact you. (Please note that, unless they tell you otherwise, it may not be easy for your child's teachers to speak with parents at the beginning of the day.)

You're also encouraged to arrange to speak with the elementary school co-principals, Vince d'Assis ([vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org)) and Ivy Summers ([ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org)). Drop by the Elementary Center or leave a message for them in the Office.



If you have questions or issues you'd like to discuss, please don't hesitate to phone or to make an appointment. Our Office staff, as well as the preschool director and elementary school co-principals are available to help. Safety-related concerns should be directed to Safety Officers Vince d'Assis or Ivy Summers.

# Parent Participation

There are many ways Meher Schools parents can contribute to their children's education.

## Preschool—Volunteering, Substituting

**COVID Change:** During the pandemic, we cannot have parents in the classroom, but we there are many ways to help preschool teachers from home: making playdough, taking laundry home, preparing materials for an art project. Check with your child's teachers.

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If you have some free time and would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please fill out the Parent Participation form that you'll receive via e-mail at the beginning of the school year and find all year in the Parent Resource Center. Then you might talk with your child's teacher about arranging an activity that you would enjoy. Parents can also volunteer to be a reader in the preschool on a regular basis. Contact the preschool director if you're interested. Volunteers are especially welcome around holiday times. Parents sometimes donate food for cooking projects.

Some parents discover that they enjoy working with young children and sign up to be substitutes in our preschool program. When needed, substitutes are called in the morning to see if they're available that day. One benefit of substituting is a flexible schedule. If you're interested in substituting, please note this on the Parent Participation form.

## Elementary School—Supporting Academic Growth

Parents often ask how they might best participate at school. We've found that the most helpful participation is offered by fully supporting your child's academic progress. Studies show that when parents take an active interest in their child's learning, when they regard learning as fun, and when school work is a priority in the family, the child reflects that interest by higher achievement, greater enjoyment, and more involvement in his or her own learning. Here are some ways to support your child's education at home:

- Read to or with your child every day for at least 15 minutes.
- Set aside a regular time each day for homework. We suggest that parents review homework with their children daily to stay informed about what they're learning and to demonstrate that they consider the work important. Parents may assist their children with any problems that need to be re-done.
- See that homework is completed in a pleasant and attractive way and that it's brought to school the following morning.
- Offer praise and enthusiasm for work well done, for effort, and for increasing levels of achievement. Be positive and supportive.
- Participate in activities suggested in communications from teachers.
- Help your child organize his or her binder.
- Borrow the two-hour video on the Nurtured Heart Approach from the Elementary Center.

## Classroom Observations

**COVID Change:** Visitors are not permitted in classrooms at this time due to health and safety requirements.

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**Elementary school.** We encourage parents to make an appointment through the co-principals to observe in their child's classroom sometime during the school year. Observations are best scheduled after the first few weeks of school, when routines are established.

**Preschool.** Preschool parents are permitted to enter their children's classrooms at any time.

## Volunteer Opportunities

**COVID Change:** Due to health and safety requirements, most volunteer activities that take place indoors at school are suspended for the school year. If volunteer opportunities do arise, we'll let you know via *eNote* or *Wednesday Messages*.

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Although parents are not required to participate, for those who like to be involved in the school through volunteering, there are many ways to contribute throughout the year. There are opportunities for those who are able to make a regular commitment, such as serving as a receptionist in the Office, and for those who can help occasionally or on a one-time basis, such as working with us on special projects.

At the start of the new school year, we'll send you via e-mail a Parent Participation form, which lists some of the possibilities. You can also [download the form](#) from the Parent Resource Center.

During the year, you'll learn about other schoolwide volunteer opportunities through *Wednesday Messages*, *eNotes*, and the Parent Resource Center. Information about activities in your child's classroom that involve volunteers is posted on the classroom bulletin board and placed in your child's homework folder or binder.

If you find at any time that you have a few hours free and would like to help out, you can drop Vince d'Assis a note at [vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org). Whatever your interests or skills, chances are we have a volunteer role for you!

5.

*Dropping Off and Picking Up  
Your Child*

# Signing In, Signing Out

## COVID Changes

- Drop-off and pick-up will take longer than usual. New requirements outlined below will mean parking spaces might be occupied longer than usual. **Please allow for extra time at drop-off and pick-up, and follow these guidelines:** Park as usual, though you may use street parking as well. Do not park in the Tier 2 or 3 parking lot.
- Be extra cautious when driving and walking in the lot.
- **Do not block parked cars when waiting for a parking spot. Keep circling through the lot until a space opens up.**
- Social distance in the parking lot (stay at least six feet from others; adults and children in elementary school wear a mask or cloth face covering).
- **Do NOT gather in the lot, garden, or hallways.**
- Parents MUST go with their children to a health-screening station.

See “Picking Up Your Child,” below, for new pick-up procedures. Beforecare will be in the child’s regular classroom, with the child’s own teachers. It will begin at 8 and is limited to families who are signed up for daycare and require care at that time due to their work schedules. Most families will arrive right before school begins for their child.

## *Picking Up Your Child*

Please do the following before picking up your child to help minimize the risk of bringing outside contagions onto campus:

1. If you work in a high-risk environment (medical or dental office, restaurant or retail, etc.), please shower (if possible) and change your clothes before coming on campus.
2. Everyone should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before or upon arriving at school.
3. To minimize potential exposure, only one adult should come to the classroom to pick up a child. Others should wait in the car. Since young children cannot remain in cars unattended, any other children you must bring will need to stay in the hallway with you.

Below you’ll find changes to pick-up procedures that help ensure social distancing and minimize the chance of bringing outside contagions into the classrooms.

## **Preschool**

1. Come to the classroom and wait in line, six feet apart.
2. Sign your child out using the roll book.
  - a. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before touching the sign-in book.
  - b. Use a pen from the “Clean” jar to sign, then put it in “Used” jar.
3. Stand in the doorway and let the teachers know you’re there to pick up your child. They will gather your child’s belongings and bring your child to the door. If children are on the

yard, walk around the building and signal to the teachers that you're there. Please don't walk through the classroom.

4. Leave campus as quickly as possible to minimize possible exposure.

**Elementary School (With No Aftercare)** Come to the classroom and wait in line in the designated spots in the hallway.

1. When it's your turn at the door, the teachers will release your child to you with the child's belongings. Do not go inside the classroom.
2. Leave campus as quickly as possible, to minimize possible exposure.

### **Elementary Aftercare**

1. Come to the classroom and wait in line, six feet apart.
2. Sign your child out in the roll book.
  - a. Wash your hands or use sanitizer before touching the sign-out book
  - b. Use a pen from the "Clean" jar to sign, then put it in the "Used" jar.
3. Stand in the doorway and let the teachers know you're there to pick up your child. They'll gather your child's belongings and bring the child and his/her belongings to you.

If the class is in the yard, walk around the building to the yard and signal to the teacher that you're there. Please don't walk through the classroom.

4. Leave campus as quickly as possible, to minimize possible exposure.

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Procedures for dropping children off in the morning and picking them up after school vary depending on the grade a child is in and the time of day. *It is essential that these procedures be followed.* Roll sheets tell us which children are on campus at any given time (a safety issue) and are used to calculate daycare charges.

These important points are explored in the sections below:

■ **Preschoolers** must be signed in and out regardless of whether they're in daycare. If parents forget to sign in or out, or don't sign according to the very specific guidelines spelled out by our licensing agency, we're required by law to call them to come back to the school immediately and do so. Anyone bringing or picking up children (parents, relatives, nannies) needs to be aware of these procedures and of the importance of following them per our licensing requirements.

■ **Kindergartners** must be signed in and out regardless of whether they're in daycare.

■ Students in **Grades 1–5** who don't use before- or aftercare are not signed in or out. If they do use daycare, their parents must sign them in (beforecare) and/or out (aftercare).

■ Children at all grade levels who are not enrolled in aftercare and whose parents don't pick them up promptly at the end of the academic day are checked into aftercare. If a child is repeatedly not picked up on time, the school will charge the family for aftercare. *There is **no grace period** for late pick-ups.*

■ The parents of K–5 students enrolled in after-school **Explorations** classes are charged after-care fees if their children remain on campus for more than 15 minutes between the end of the

academic day and the beginning of the class, or if they remain on campus after class. In that case, they're charged for all the hours between the end of the academic day and when they're picked up. (See "[Explorations and Daycare Policy](#)" in part 1.)

■ Parents who have not picked their children up from aftercare by the end of the day are assessed a **late fee**, payable on the spot to aftercare teachers. (See "[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)" in part 1.)

■ Only you or someone you name on your **Information/Emergency Form** is allowed to sign your child out from school. (See the next section.)

*If you have any questions about these procedures, please ask a teacher.*

*Please be sure to read part 6, "[Daycare \(Beforecare and Aftercare\)](#)," and "[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)" in part 1.*

## People Authorized to Pick Up Your Child

Children can be released only to their parents or others listed as authorized on the Information/Emergency Form. People on your daily pick-up list have permission to pick up your child on a regular (daily) basis.

Parents often find that they need to add names to the list of people who pick their children up regularly or need to have someone not on their list pick up their children on a permanent or one-time basis. Please review these guidelines, noting especially the procedure for calling the Office when requesting a one-time change, which in some instances requires email confirmation of your phone request.

### *Permanent Additions*

To add someone to the list of people who pick up your child regularly, you'll need to sign and submit a Changes to Information/Emergency Form. Please fill out a Badge Request Form (available in the Office and [downloadable here](#) from the Parent Resource Center) for the person you're adding at the same time you fill out this form. Otherwise the person you add will need to come to the Office when picking up your child until he or she gets a badge.

### *One-Time Changes*

**Preschool.** If you want someone who isn't on your regular pick-up list to pick your child up, fill out the special form that's located next to the roll sheet in his or her classroom.

**K-5:** If you want someone who isn't on your regular pick-up list to pick your child up, fill out an Elementary Pick-Up Information form (available in the Office) and give it to the receptionist in the Office. If you arrive before the Office opens, you'll find this small green form in the plastic "pocket" on the Office door. Please fill it out and slip it under the door.

**Calling the Office.** If for some reason you're not able to let us know in the ways outlined above about one-time changes, you may call the Office. The Office staff will need to verify your identity, either over the phone or via e-mail. Please be aware that you may need to send a confirmation e-mail from the e-mail address we have on file for you. We know that this extra step is something of an inconvenience, but it's part of our continued effort to ensure the safety of children entrusted to our care. Thank you for understanding.

See "[Temporary Pick-up Information](#)" in part 1.

## The Importance of Signing Your Child Out

If you're the parent of a child who stays for aftercare, *it is very important that you remember to sign your child out*. If a child is not signed out and is not present when roll is taken, we initiate procedures we have in place for when a student is missing. This can include filing a missing-child report with the sheriff's department.

Also, parents who repeatedly fail to sign their children out may be billed for full-time aftercare.

## The Importance of Arriving on Time

**COVID Change:** Due to the new sign-in procedures and health checks, teachers won't mark children tardy if they're waiting to do their health check and sign in when the bell rings.

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We encourage parents to begin early the practice of having their children at school on time. Children who arrive late miss a critical part of the day and know they're missing some of their favorite activities. Punctuality is a critical habit to cultivate that will be important throughout their educational careers. It is very helpful when parents respect and model this behavior for their children. Kindergartners who arrive after 8:40 and students in Grades 1–5 who arrive after 8:20 are marked tardy.

## Preschool

**The preschool program** begins at 9 a.m. and ends at noon. Parents who drop their children off before the program starts will be charged for daycare. Those who arrive earlier and stay with their children until 9 (the beginning of the preschool program) will not. Children who are not picked up promptly at noon are signed into aftercare and their parents billed accordingly.

■ *It is a legal requirement that you sign your child in and out. The roll sheet is a legal record. It enables us to keep track of your child while he or she is in our care.*

■ *State law requires that whoever drops off or picks up a preschool child must sign his or her full legal signature and the exact time the child arrives and leaves. On the roll sheets are boxes in half-hour increments in which to write pick-up and drop-off times.*

■ *If you do not sign in or out with your full legal signature, or if you sign on the wrong line, the teachers are required by law to call you to come back to the school immediately to do so.*

### *Arrival—Signing Your Preschooler In*

*You must sign in on the roll sheets following the procedure below to satisfy licensing requirements.*

**COVID Change:** Beforecare begins at 8 a.m. Students go directly to their classrooms when they arrive on campus.

**Arriving between 7 and 8 a.m. (beforecare and the Breakfast Program).** Please take your child to Room 5 and sign in on the roll sheet on the clipboard. Place your child’s lunch and belongings in his or her classroom. Preschool and elementary children share this time together in Room 5. They play with toys, “read” books, or help the teachers prepare for the day.

The Breakfast Program is available only to children arriving before 7:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. See “[The Breakfast Program](#)” in part 6.

**Preschoolers arriving between 8 and 9 a.m. (beforecare).** Please take your child to his or her assigned classroom (or to the adjacent play yard if children are outside), sign in on the roll sheet in that room, and place your child’s lunch and belongings in the room.

## Preschool Sign-in Procedure

- **Write** the *exact time* you arrive in the correct time box.
- **Circle** your *arrival time*.
- If you do *not* use daycare, be certain to **place the circled time inside the “9–12” box to the left of the asterisk**.
- **Sign** your *full name* next to the arrival time.

### *Departure—Signing Your Preschooler Out*

**COVID Change:** The school day ends at noon. Aftercare ends at 5 p.m.

The preschool day ends at noon, before lunch is served. Please arrive on time to pick your child up. Sign out on the roll sheet on the clipboard, which is usually found near the door of the classroom where you pick up your child. Remember to check your child’s folder and retrieve his or her belongings. Be certain to let a teacher know that your child is leaving. Please do not linger with your child, as daycare begins promptly at 12.

Preschoolers who remain after noon are signed into aftercare, and if children are repeatedly picked up after noon, families will be charged for aftercare. If you neglect to sign out, you will be asked to return to school to fill out the roll sheet correctly, per our licensing requirements. We don’t have a way to charge for hourly aftercare. If parents repeatedly neglect to sign out and won’t come back, our licensing agency suggests we drop their children from our rolls.

Here are likely places to find your preschooler in the afternoon:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 12–1 p.m.   | Assigned classroom or adjacent play yard   |
| 1–2 p.m.    | Rester Room or Nap Room (rooms are assigned at the beginning of the school year) |
| 2–3 p.m.    | Nap Room, afternoon play room, or play yard                                      |
| 3–5:45 p.m. | Room 1 or adjacent play yard (all children from Rooms 1 and 2)                   |

Room 5 or adjacent play yard (all children from Rooms 3, 4, and 5)

5:30–6:30 p.m. Room 5 or adjacent play yard—all preschoolers

Our aftercare program ends promptly at 6:30 p.m. Please allow enough time to gather your child’s belongings and leave by the time aftercare ends. (See “[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)” in part 1.)

### Roll Sheet Example: Preschool

This sample roll sheet shows the correct way to sign your preschooler in and out in various situations. A sample sign-in/sign-out sheet is also clipped to the top of the roll sheets. *If you have any questions, please ask a teacher.*

Preschool													
					In * Out								
	7-7:30	7:30-8	8-8:30	8:30-9	9-12	12-12:30	12:30-1	1-1:30	1:30-2	2-2:30	2:30-3	>>>	6-6:30
M			May Smith		9:00	12:00	May Smith						
Tu		7:35	May Smith		12:00	May Smith							
W	7:21	May Smith			12:00	May Smith							
Th	May Smith		8:17		*					2:12	May Smith		
F			May Smith		9:00						May Smith		6:15

**Monday:** Child arrives at 9 a.m. (no beforecare), is taken home at noon (no aftercare).

**Tuesday:** Child arrives between 7:30 and 8 a.m. (beforecare, no Breakfast Program), is taken home at noon (no aftercare).

**Wednesday:** Child arrives between 7 and 7:30 a.m. for Breakfast Program and beforecare, is taken home at noon.

**Thursday:** Child arrives between 8 and 8:30 a.m. (beforecare) and is taken home between 2 and 2:30 p.m. (aftercare).

**Friday:** Child arrives at 9 a.m. and is taken home at 6:15 p.m.

## Elementary School

### Kindergarten

**COVID Change:** Beforecare will be in the child’s regular classroom, with their own teachers. It will begin at 8:00 and is limited to families who are signed up for daycare and require care at that time due to their work schedules. Most families will arrive right before school begins for their child (see LINK for the school schedule, which varies by program). Children who do not attend aftercare must be picked up promptly at 2.

The kindergarten academic day begins at 8:40 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m. Parents whose children are dropped off before 8:30 will be charged for beforecare. Children who are not picked up promptly at 2 are checked into aftercare and their parents billed accordingly. *This fee is not reversible.*

Parents of kindergartners sign in and out on roll sheets when they drop off and pick up their children. Unlike in preschool, however, in elementary school you only need to sign your initials. It is important that you sign in and out to help teachers track your children and know which children are to be signed in to aftercare at the end of the day.

### *Arrival—Signing Your Kindergartner In*

**COVID Change:** Beforecare is by pre-enrollment only and begins at 8 a.m. Children go directly to their classrooms. There is currently no Breakfast Program.

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**Arriving between 7 and 8 a.m. (beforecare and the Breakfast Program).** Please take your child to Room 5 and sign in on the kindergarten roll sheet. Then take the child’s lunch and personal belongings to his or her assigned kindergarten classroom.

The Breakfast Program is available only to children who arrive before 7:30 a.m. Pre-registration is required. See “[The Breakfast Program](#)” in part 6 for information about this option.

**Arriving between 8 and 8:30 a.m. for beforecare.** Please complete the health check, sign in on the roll sheet in front of your child’s classroom, place the child’s belongings in the hallway outside his or her classroom, and take him or her to the classroom.

*Note:* If your kindergartner **arrives between 8:30 and 8:40**, you must sign in, but you will not be charged for daycare.

### *Departure—Signing Your Kindergartner Out*

**COVID Change:** The full-day kindergarten day ends at 2. Hybrid classes end mid-day. Aftercare ends at 5 or 5:30, depending on what room your child is in.

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For kindergartners the full day ends and aftercare begins at 2 p.m. sharp. *There is no grace period.* Students who are not picked up on time are checked into aftercare and their parents are may be charged for aftercare. Kindergartners are picked up at the door of their classroom. To get a message to the kindergarten aftercare teachers, call the Office and we’ll pass it along.

**COVID Change: Do not enter the classroom.** Your child’s teacher will open the door to excuse children at the end of the day.

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Please do not enter your child’s classroom until the teachers have finished taking roll and the roll sheet binders are taken to the gazebo behind Room 8. Please wait out of sight of the children. Entering the classroom or looking in the window while roll is being taken is very distracting to students and teachers, and this makes it difficult to take roll accurately.

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### *Aftercare*

**COVID Change:** Children will remain in their own classroom or in they play yard until their classroom closes for the day.

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**Leaving between 2 and 5 p.m.** Look for your child in the yard behind Rooms 7, 8, or 16 or in your child’s classroom. Be sure to sign out your child on the roll sheets. The kindergarten roll sheets are in the on a table in front of the classroom.

**Leaving between 5 and 6:30 p.m.** Children in Rooms 7 and 8 and the kindergarten roll sheets migrate to Room 10 with the children at 5. Please pick up your child and sign him or her out there.

(See part 6, “[Daycare](#),” for information about our before- and aftercare program.)

**Explorations classes.**

**COVID Change:** In-person Explorations classes are cancelled until further notice.

If your child is enrolled in an Explorations class that begins more than 15 minutes after the end of the school day—later than 2:15 for kindergartners—you’ll be charged for aftercare until the time you sign your child out. We don’t deduct Explorations hours because we’re still responsible for your child while he or she is with us. If you don’t want to be charged for aftercare, you may take your child off campus at the end of the academic day, bring him or her back for the class, then pick him or her up immediately after the class ends.

After class, Explorations teachers walk kindergartners to Room 7 to meet their parents or to check them (back) into aftercare. Kindergartners must be picked up in Room 7 after Explorations classes and signed out in the roll book at the time they’re picked up. If you’re late, you’ll be charged for aftercare from the time school lets out (2 p.m.) until you pick your child up. (See “[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)” in part 1).

**Roll Sheet Example: Kindergarten**

This sample roll sheet shows the correct way to sign your child in and out in various situations. *If you have any questions, please ask a teacher.*

Kindergarten													
				In * Out									
	7-7:30	7:30-8	8-8:30	8:30-2	2-2:30	2:30-3	3-3:30	3:30-4	4-4:30	4:30-5	5-5:30	5:30-6	6-6:60
M				BS * Bf									
Tu		Bf		* Bf									
W	Bf			* Bf									
Th			Bf	*					Bf				
F				Bf *									Bf

**Monday:** Child arrives at 8:30 a.m. (no beforecare), is taken home at 2 p.m. (no aftercare).

**Tuesday:** Child arrives between 7:30 and 8 a.m. (beforecare, no Breakfast Program), is taken home at 2 p.m. (no aftercare).

**Wednesday:** Child arrives between 7 and 7:30 a.m. for Breakfast Program and beforecare, is taken home at 2 p.m. (no aftercare).

**Thursday:** Child arrives between 8 and 8:30 a.m. (beforecare) and is taken home between 4 and 4:30 p.m. (aftercare).

**Friday:** Child arrives at 8:30 a.m. and is taken home at 6:15 p.m. (aftercare).

## Grades 1–5

The school day for students in Grades 1–5 begins at 8:20.

**COVID Change:** Beforecare will be in the child’s regular classroom, with their own teachers. It begins at 8:00 .m. and is limited to families who are signed up for daycare and require care at that time due to their work schedules. Most families will arrive right before school begins for their child (starting times vary by grade).

Children who do not attend aftercare must be picked up promptly when school ends for the day. Children who are not picked up on time will be signed into aftercare and their parents may be charged for aftercare.

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Parents of children in these grades sign their children *in* only if they arrive before 8 and *out* only if they use aftercare or (in some cases) are enrolled in an Explorations class (see “*Explorations Classes,*” below.) *Parents whose first through fifth graders arrive between 8 and 8:20 are not charged for beforecare.*

Children in full-day classes who are not picked up promptly at the end of the academic day (2 p.m. for first graders, 2:30 for second through fifth graders) are signed into aftercare and their parents may be charged for aftercare.

### *Arrival—Dropping Off Your First Through Fifth Grader*

#### **Arriving between 7 and 8 a.m. (beforecare and Breakfast Program).**

**COVID Change:** Beforecare is by pre-enrollment only and begins at 8:00. The Breakfast Program is not currently offered.

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Please go with your child to his or her classroom and leave the child’s belongings outside the room, then take him or her to Room 5 and sign in on the roll sheets there.

*Do not drop your child off on the big playground before 8 a.m., when there is no teacher on duty.*

Breakfast is served in Room 5 for those students who are signed up for the Breakfast Program. The Breakfast Program is available only to children arriving before 7:30. (See “*The Breakfast Program,*” in part 6 for details.)

#### **Arriving between 8 and 8:20 a.m.**

**COVID Change:** Students may arrive between 8 and 8:20 only if they are enrolled in beforecare. Beforecare will be in their cohort’s classroom, with their own teachers. Parents take students to the classroom door to complete the health check and sign-in. Most families arrive right before school begins for their child.

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## *Departure—Picking Up Your First Through Fifth Grader*

**COVID Change:** Students who stay for aftercare remain in their own classroom or on the playground with only their own cohort until the day ends. Children who are not enrolled in aftercare must be picked up promptly when the school day ends to avoid being charged for aftercare.

---

**First grade.** The school day ends at 2 p.m. for first grade children. Those who don't stay for aftercare should be picked up at the front door of their classroom at 2. Those who do stay for aftercare are escorted by a teacher to the benches on the playground at 2 for roll call and checked into daycare.

**Second through fifth grades.** The school day ends at 2:30 p.m. for students in Grades 2–5. At 2:30 those students who aren't staying for aftercare walk with a teacher to the front steps to be picked up by their parents. At 2:45 any children who haven't been picked up at the steps are escorted to the playground and checked into aftercare. Students who stay for aftercare report to the benches on the playground.

### *Aftercare*

The Elementary Aftercare Center is Room 10, which is open for various activities from around 3 p.m. until 6:30 p.m.

When you arrive during aftercare to pick up your child, he or she may be in Room 10, in the Library, or on the playground. Between 2 and 3 p.m., the roll book is at the benches on the playground with a teacher. Between 3 and 6:30, it's in Room 10.

If a child is here when aftercare begins, a teacher signs the child in to daycare by placing a checkmark next to his or her name. This checkmark should not be confused with signing out your child—*your initials are required in the appropriate sign-out space on the roll sheet*. Please initial the day and time you sign your child out—and be sure a teacher knows you are taking your child home. Children's backpacks, lunches, jackets, and other belongings are stored on the third-tier shelves.

Students enrolled in aftercare may not sign themselves out to meet their parents at the steps or in a parking area. Parents or an authorized pick-up person must sign them out. (The exception is children who have been authorized by their parents, in writing, to ride their bicycles or walk home when the school day ends. Children can't ride to school this year because their parents need to sign them in and conduct the morning health check. If you haven't given your child permission to walk or bike from school but wish to, or to rescind permission you gave earlier, use the Changes to Information/ Emergency Form. You can [download the form](#) from the Parent Resource Center, or pick up a copy in the Office.)

**Note:** Summer schedules vary. We'll send you information if you register your child for summer school.

### *Explorations Classes*

**COVID Change:** In-person Explorations classes are suspended for the time being.

---

If your child is enrolled in an Explorations class that begins more than 15 minutes after the end of the school day—i.e., later than 2:15 for kindergartners and first graders and 2:45 for second through fifth graders—you’ll be charged for aftercare until the time you sign your child out. We don’t deduct Explorations hours because we’re still responsible for your child while he or she is with us. If you don’t wish to be charged for aftercare, you may take your child off campus at the end of the academic day, bring him or her back for the class, then pick him or her up immediately after the class ends.

After class, Explorations teachers walk first through fifth grade students to Room 10 to meet their parents or to check them (back) into aftercare. Children must be picked up in Room 10 after Explorations classes and signed out in the roll book at the time they’re picked up. If you’re late, you’ll be charged for aftercare from the time school lets out (2 or 2:30) until you pick your child up. (See “*Explorations and Daycare Policy*” in part 1.)

**Roll Sheet Example: First Grade**

This sample roll sheet shows the correct way to sign your child in and out in various situations. *If you have any questions, please ask a teacher.*

Grade 1												
	In * Out											
	7-7:30	7:30-8	8-2	2-2:30	2:30-3	3-3:30	3:30-4	4-4:30	4:30-5	5-5:30	5:30-6	6-6:30
M			*									
Tu		<i>JK</i>	*									
W	<i>JK</i>		*									
Th			*					<i>JK</i>				
F			*									<i>JK</i>

**Monday:** Child arrives at 8:20 a.m. (no beforecare), is taken home at 2 p.m. (no aftercare)—*no sign-in or sign-out.*

**Tuesday:** Child arrives between 7:30 and 8 a.m. (beforecare, no Breakfast Program), is taken home at 2 p.m. (no aftercare)—*no sign-out.*

**Wednesday:** Child arrives between 7 and 7:30 a.m. (Breakfast Program and beforecare), is taken home at 2 p.m.—*no sign-out.*

**Thursday:** Child arrives between 8 and 8:20 a.m. and is taken home between 4 and 4:30 p.m. (aftercare).

**Friday:** Child arrives at 8:20 a.m. and is taken home at 6:15 p.m. (aftercare).

**Roll Sheet Example: Grades 2–5**

This sample roll sheet shows the correct way to sign your child in and out in various situations. *If you have any questions, please ask a teacher.*

Grades 2–5											
	7–7:30	7:30–8	In * Out 8–2:30	2:30–3	3–3:30	3:30–4	4–4:30	4:30–5	5–5:30	5:30–6	6–6:30
M			*								
Tu		DE	*								
W	DE		*								
Th			*				DE				
F			*								DE

**Monday:** Child arrives at 8:20 a.m. (no beforecare), is taken home at 2:30 p.m. (no aftercare).

**Tuesday:** Child arrives between 7:30 and 8 a.m. (beforecare, no Breakfast Program), is taken home at 2:30 p.m. (no aftercare).

**Wednesday:** Child arrives between 7 and 7:30 a.m. for Breakfast Program and beforecare, is taken home at 2:30 p.m.

**Thursday:** Child arrives between 8 and 8:20 a.m. and is taken home between 4 and 4:30 p.m. (aftercare).

**Friday:** Child arrives at 8:20 a.m. and is taken home at 6:15 p.m. (aftercare).

## Supervising Your Child After Signing Out

**COVID Change:** The Children’s Garden is closed for the time being. Parents and caregivers and children should leave campus immediately after signing out.

Under the terms of our insurance policy, only children who are in our care should be on campus while school is in session. Our staff is no longer responsible for students once they’ve been signed out, so parents need to keep their children with them while they sign them out and gather their belongings, then take them off campus.

The exception to this is the Children’s Garden in front of the school (below Rooms 3–5). Parents and children are welcome to enjoy this garden after school. It’s a good place for parents to wait with their kindergarten and first grade children for older siblings who are dismissed at 2:30.

*Parents must closely supervise their children in this fragile garden. (See “[Guidelines for Using the Children’s Garden](#)” in part 3.)*

## Late Pick-up and Late Fees

**COVID Change:** Aftercare in all classroom closes by 5:30 p.m. The fees below apply if a child is picked up after 5 or 5:30, depending on the classroom.

Please call the school if you find that you're going to be unexpectedly late. Your child worries about you, and so do we.

**Closing time.** We expect children to be picked up by closing time. This means that parents need to come a few minutes *before* closing time to gather their children and their belongings in order to depart by closing time. Those who have not picked their children up by then are assessed a late fee, payable on the spot to the aftercare teachers. (See "[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)" in *part 1*.)

*If you know you'll be arriving after closing time, please make arrangements to have your child picked up before that time—and please call to let us know. (Parents find it helpful to have a back-up person to pick up their child in case they're unavoidably delayed. This person's name must be added to the Information/Emergency Form and/or the Office notified.)*

# 6.

## *Daycare* *(Beforecare and Aftercare)*

- Breakfast Program
- Explorations and Chorus

# Daycare at The Meher Schools

**COVID Change:** Daycare begins at 8 a.m. for families that have registered and ends at 5 or 5:30, depending on the classroom.

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The Meher Schools offers extended daycare programs as a service to working parents. Beforecare begins at 7 a.m. and aftercare ends at 6:30 p.m. Parents who must leave their children early in the morning have the option of enrolling them in the Breakfast Program (*see below*). Aftercare begins at the end of the academic day—noon for preschoolers, 2 p.m. for kindergartners and first graders, and 2:30 for children in Grades 2–5—and ends at 6:30. Parents may sign up for any portion of the daycare hours on an hourly or monthly-fee basis.

When signing up for daycare, please estimate the hours you will most likely be using. Try to estimate the earliest and latest possible times your child will be arriving.

**Important.** *Be sure to read “[Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child](#)” (part 5) for an explanation of the procedures for signing children into and out of daycare. See also “[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)” in part 1.*

## Monthly and Hourly Daycare

**COVID Change:** Hourly daycare is not available at this time, only flat-rate (monthly). See the Fee Schedule for daycare fees.

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Parents who enroll their children in full-time (monthly) daycare pay a flat monthly fee for as many or few hours of daycare as they use. Those who enroll their children in **hourly** daycare are billed based on the number of daycare hours they use in a given month. (*See the [fee schedule](#) in part 1.*) Parents can change from monthly to hourly or hourly to monthly daycare *once each school year*. During the summer, they can choose to change each session.

**Schedule changes.** *See “[Changing Your Child’s Schedule](#)” in part 1 for information about making temporary and permanent changes to your child’s daycare schedule.*

## Beforecare

**COVID Change:** Daycare begins at 8 a.m. for those who are signed up.

---

Beforecare begins at 7 a.m. Some children who are enrolled in beforecare eat breakfast at home before coming to school, and some participate in the Breakfast Program.

*Children of all ages who arrive before 8 must be escorted to their beforecare rooms and signed in by their parents.* Beforecare for children of all ages begins in Room 5.

**Preschoolers.** After breakfast, at about 7:50, preschoolers are taken by teachers to their respective classrooms to continue with beforecare.

**COVID Change:** Parents escort their elementary children to their classrooms when they arrive on campus. They complete the health check and sign their children in.

---

*Kindergartners.* After breakfast kindergartners are taken by a teacher to the kindergarten yard (if the weather is good) or to Room 7 or 8, where they play until 8:40, when the bell rings for them to line up outside their own classrooms.

*First through fifth graders.* At around 8 these students are escorted by a teacher to the playground (or to the Library if it's raining), where they remain until their academic day begins at 8:20. Children who arrive after 8 may be dropped off; their teachers sign them in when the bell rings and the school day begins.

## The Breakfast Program

**COVID Change:** The Breakfast Program is suspended for as long as the children are in pods.

---

Available by pre-registration only, the Breakfast Program is a cooperative program offered for those parents who need to leave their children early in the morning. It takes place in Room 5.

The Breakfast Program begins at 7 a.m. Children who participate must arrive before 7:30. **Please do not come late.** We have a very brief window of time, between 7:30 and 7:50, for children to eat and for teachers to clean the room for the rest of beforecare and the school day. If children consistently arrive after 7:30, we will ask their parents to withdraw them from the program.

Parents are assigned supplies to bring for breakfast. These groceries, furnished by participating parents, are used to prepare a hot breakfast each morning for about 40 children. Groceries cost an average of \$5–\$7 a week per child. Participating parents agree to bring the food they are assigned to bring *even if their child will be absent from school that day.*

Because we have limited space, we ask that you *not* stay with your child after the first day he or she attends the Breakfast Program.

It can be tempting for parents to linger and visit with other parents. If you wish to do this, please chat in the hallway. It's distracting for parents to talk in the room during the Breakfast Program, as both space and time are limited. We emphasize, however, that the Breakfast Program is offered as a service to parents who, because of their work schedules, are unable to prepare breakfast at home.

If your needs change and you want to sign up for or withdraw from the program, please notify the Office.

## Aftercare

**COVID Change:** Aftercare for elementary students ends at 5 or 5:30, depending on what room the child is in.

---

Aftercare begins promptly when the academic day ends (noon for preschoolers, 2 p.m. for kindergartners and first graders, 2:30 for second through fifth graders) and ends at 6:30. **Please note**

that children who aren't picked up promptly at the end of the academic day are automatically checked into aftercare and their parents billed accordingly.

Aftercare is designed to be an engaging, safe, and happy time. It provides children with many opportunities for learning. This is a time when children learn and practice socially acceptable behavior, compassion, kindness, helpfulness, creative problem solving, good sportsmanship, and (for elementary students) good study habits and organizational skills.

**Late fee.** Parents who have not picked their children up from aftercare by the end of the day are assessed a late fee, payable on the spot to aftercare teachers. (See "[Before- and Aftercare Policies](#)" in part 1.)

## Preschool

See "[Aftercare: 12 to 6:30](#)" in part 7.

## Kindergarten

**COVID Change:** Kindergarteners remain in their own classrooms or on the play yard, with their cohort, until they go home.

---

After roll call at 2 p.m., kindergartners are encouraged to eat snacks they've brought from home. After snack they're free to play in the yard or to play games or do art or craft projects in Room 7. At 3:30 they clean Room 7 and the play yard and enjoy a snack provided by the school. This is followed by games or a quiet story time inside and then a short period of free play. Clean-up is at 4:50. At 5 o'clock kindergartners remaining in aftercare go Room 10.

## Grades 1–5

**COVID Change:** Students remain in their own classrooms or play outdoors, with their cohort, until they go home. Room 10 is no longer a general aftercare room; neither the Library nor Homework Club is available. To contact a child who is in aftercare, phone the school ((925) 938-9958), and someone will transfer your call.

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In elementary aftercare, children are free to play on the playground, engage in a variety of activities in Room 10, or use the Library. Occasionally there are G- and PG-rated movies in Room 17, structured games on the grassy field above the school, gardening activities, story time in the Library, and special art projects. All activities are supervised by our aftercare staff.

**Room 10.** Room 10 is the Aftercare Room. It is open to aftercare students in Grades 1–5 from 3 until 6:30 p.m. for quiet games, art and craft projects, and socializing. School-provided snacks are served in Room 10 or the yard behind it at 3:30 and 5:30. At the end of the day, the children clean the room—sweep the floor, wash tables, stack chairs, empty trash—to prepare the room for the next day. There's a telephone in the Aftercare Room that students can use to call or receive calls from their parents: (925) 938-4880.

**The Library and Homework Club.** Homework Club, which takes place in the Library, offers a time and space for first through fifth graders to complete their homework while they're still fresh

and full of energy. Homework Club staff check homework for completion but can't guarantee that all homework is completed correctly.

Some students “drop in” to Homework Club as they wish, while other students are signed up by their parents or teachers and attend daily. If you want your child to be required to go to Homework Club, please leave a message for our librarian, Thea Montandon, in the Office. If children are signed up for other activities between 2:30 and 3:30, they would not attend Homework Club on that day, and would complete their assignments at home.

Students in Grades 1–5 who are not in Homework Club may also visit the Library between 2:30 and 3:30 to read books or work on projects.

## Aftercare Snacks

Although the school provides preschool children with morning and aftercare snacks, parents of elementary students are asked to pack a piece of fruit with cheese or other protein for an after-school snack if the children stay for aftercare. We find that older children can get hungry in the afternoons.

## After-School Programs: Explorations and Chorus

**COVID Change:** In-person Explorations classes and Chorus are suspended.

---

Explorations is our after-school enrichment program for K–5 students. During the academic year, the Explorations program offers a variety of classes. Classes are offered in several sessions over the course of the year. Offerings in recent years have included such classes as touch-typing, theater arts, computer coding, puppetry, origami, and arts and crafts. Most classes are four weeks long. Class descriptions are sent via *eNote*, and registration takes place online.

**Chorus.** One of our most popular offerings, chorus is a year-long class. It's available to children in kindergarten through fifth grade. Membership in our performing chorus, the White Horse Youth Chorale, is by invitation.

***Avoiding daycare charges.*** If your child is enrolled in an Explorations class but not daycare, see “Before- and Aftercare Policies” in part 1 to avoid daycare charges.

7.

*The Preschool Day*

# New Preschoolers—The First Days

**COVID Change:** During the pandemic, parents are not allowed in classrooms. They can go to the yard behind their child’s classroom and remain there as their children are acclimated to the classroom by the teacher. Parents should accompany their child on the first day and can come to the yard on subsequent days, as the child needs for adjustment.

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Beginnings are important! So we would like to share some ideas that can make the important and exciting “first day of school” comfortable and happy for both parents and preschoolers.

One way we’ve found to smooth this transition is for parents to accompany their children on the first day of school. On the first day your child attends, we ask that you bring your child to the Office a little before 9 a.m. so the preschool director or an elementary school co-principal can meet your child and walk you and your child to the classroom. To ease the transition into a new life, either one or both parents stay with the child on this first day until noon. Please take your child home for lunch, even if your usual schedule will extend beyond 12. Your child’s teachers will work with you on a plan for the transition beyond the first day. Gradual starts form a better foundation for young children.

When you stay with your child in the classroom, it helps activate positive associations with this new environment. Your presence helps acquaint you and your child with the routine of preschool. The time you spend in the classroom on this first day also provides an opportunity for parents to meet teachers and for teachers to help orient parents and children about how the classroom works. Parents will feel easier about leaving their children in the hands of teachers once they understand the patterns of the preschool day. When you feel at ease, it helps your child to feel at ease.

*Before school starts in the fall, new preschool parents attend a 60-minute orientation by the preschool director. Her talk covers points not addressed in this handbook and is an opportunity for parents to ask questions.*

Children, like adults, can sometimes feel overwhelmed by new, unfamiliar surroundings and routines. If your child will be in daycare, during the child’s first week of school (especially for children without prior school experience) we recommend that, if possible, you begin with short days (9 a.m.–noon), gradually lengthening to longer hours. After the first morning, you may want to discuss with a teacher what scheduling arrangements will work best for you and your child to assist the transition to this new environment. Parents wait in the yard while new child explores the classroom.

One of your child’s teachers will try to call you a few days before your start date to see if you have questions and to learn more about your child. You’re also welcome and encouraged to visit your child’s preschool play yard on weekends before your start date to increase the child’s familiarity with school. If window blinds are up, please peek into the room to see what it looks like. Be sure to take your child only to the yard adjacent to his room to avoid connecting him to the wrong playground.

# Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child

**COVID Change:** The official preschool program begins at 9 a.m. and ends at noon. Any time between 8 and 9 a.m. and from noon till 5 p.m. is considered daycare.

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The official preschool program day begins at 9 a.m. and ends at noon. Daycare is available beginning at 7 a.m. and ending promptly at 6:30 p.m. The time before 9 a.m. is considered beforecare, and the time after 12 noon is considered aftercare. (See part 6, "[Daycare \(Beforecare and Aftercare\)](#)," for details.)

- *It is a legal requirement that you sign your child in and out. The roll sheet is a legal record.*
- *If you forget to sign your child in, or if you don't sign correctly, the teachers are required by law to call you to come back to the school immediately to do so.*
- *Parents who fail to sign their children out are billed for aftercare from noon until 5 p.m., when aftercare closes. This fee is **not reversible**.*

See part 5, "[Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child](#)," for more information.

## Being on Time

The preschool program begins at 9 a.m. It is important that we greet children at that time. Of course, you may come early and stay with your children until 9. *Be sure to let a teacher know your child has arrived.* It's always best to connect with a teacher and allow your child to make that connection with you. *For many children, this means literally handing your child to the teacher so your child feels comfortable and supported.*

**Preschool is not a drop-in program.** *Children will not be permitted to attend if they arrive after 9:30 a.m. unless there is an emergency or a medical appointment.* If you do have an emergency or medical appointment and want to bring your child to school late, please call the Office between 8:30 and 9 a.m. to inform us so the teacher knows to anticipate the child's late arrival.

## Morning Farewells

**COVID Change:** Parents should plan for good-byes to take place in the yard.

---

Your child's teacher will be happy to help you and your child say good-bye. Planning a little routine in advance, such as "I'll give you a hug, then blow you a kiss at the window" often helps. Parents who come before 9 a.m. often find time to read a story or sit in a relaxed way with their children. We find this helps make a nice beginning for the day.

Please honor the 9 a.m. start time and saying good-bye to your child at that time. This is the beginning of the preschool day, and children need to shift their focus from parents to teachers. If you come after 9, it can be much more difficult to help your child transition. Again, please be certain that your child has connected with a teacher and that the teacher is aware of your child's presence in the yard or classroom before you say good-bye.

Please talk to your child's teacher if you have a special reason for wanting to stay after 9 a.m.

## The Official Preschool Day: 9–12

**COVID Change:** Preschool hours are now 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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The preschool day officially begins at 9 a.m. and ends at noon.

It is helpful for you to understand your preschooler's day. Here is a description of each segment of your child's morning schedule. By design, although there is some structure in the afternoon, the morning program is more structured. In the morning, children and teachers are fresh and certain types of learning occur more naturally. The schedule of each room contains the same basic elements: Morning Circle, Work Period, Potty Work and Toileting, Snack, Free Play, and Outdoor Play.

### Morning Circle

**COVID Change:** Children do not mingle with children from other classes. They go into the yard at different times.

---

Often we have a brief play period, and then children in each room go to their Circles at specified times. Morning Circle is a time for teachers to greet and acknowledge each child and gather the class together in a feeling of unity.

Since this is often the only meeting of the entire group during the day, stories, pictures, songs, information, plays, finger poems, games, and dances are presented, often focusing on the current theme of study. It is, above all, a time for drawing together in a spirit of wonder and fun.

Circle can also be a time to take care of "class business" in order to prepare children for the day. Teachers may use Circle as an opportunity to let children share special experiences or to discuss positive ways to handle conflicts. They also use this time to demonstrate new materials and clarify classroom expectations.

Morning Circle begins the day and sets the tone for what follows. We have observed that children who miss all or part of Morning Circle tend to feel "out of sync" in some way all day. That's why we put an emphasis on punctuality in our preschool.

### Work Period

Work Period is a time for children to choose individual activities. The activities vary. Practical Life tasks (see below), cutting and pasting, special theme-related activities, and open-ended art activities are available. Depending on the interests of the children and teachers, classrooms may

feature cooking, woodworking, or handcrafts. Classroom projects emerge out of the interests and experiences of children and teachers. Sometimes books are the stimulus for a project.

Teachers often structure some classroom learning around a theme. Children participate by offering ideas for themes and helping the teachers select them. These themes might feature animals, plants, community helpers, cultural studies, or fairy tales. The activities of Circle and Work Period incorporate ideas from the theme. Teachers also observe the responses and interests of individual children and of the group in order to maximize children's excitement about discussions and activities. Theme concepts stimulate children to expand their thinking, and children's ideas stimulate teachers and help provide the direction learning will take.

Our work time focuses on activities suggested by Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori stressed the importance of an ordered environment to help children focus and develop the ability to concentrate. Though there are many different types of Montessori activities, we emphasize Practical Life activities. These are tasks with a given set of steps, such as pouring water or dry grains, sweeping, using scoops and funnels and spoons—in general, helping children become responsible for the care of their environment, themselves, and their little companions. The environment is designed to support children's growth toward independence and success and making choices. Children learn independence by putting their work and toys away, by cleaning up after snack, by learning self-help and care, and by making choices in activities.

The arts play a major role in our work with children. Children are given opportunities to express themselves through art, music, dance, and handicrafts and to develop an appreciation for beauty in all its forms.

Teachers try to inspire children's responsiveness to beautiful imagery and to encourage their confidence and creativity in exploring a wide variety of activities. Children's creations (paintings, dances, songs, crafts) are responded to with deep appreciation and respect.

## Potty Work and Toileting

The "potty work" schedule varies from room to room. Establishing a regular and rhythmic routine with potty training is important, as it is with all activities for young children. Children who need reminding are invited to use the potty and wash their hands. Those who are not fully trained are assisted, and those who still use diapers are given fresh diapers. Children wash their hands whenever their diapers are changed or they use the potty.

For some children and parents, potty training is easy and relatively quick. For others, it takes longer. Our goal is to support children and parents in a patient, understanding way in the steps from using diapers to using the toilet. Usually children become potty trained at home before they become potty trained at school.

Sometimes parents either automatically assume that their children are ready to wear underpants at school or simply wish (understandably) to push things along a bit and send them to school in underpants before they're ready. This results in a hard time for child and teacher—accidents throughout the day, having to leave play to change clothes. Please talk to a teacher before sending a child to school without a diaper. Observation over the years has shown us that pushing is almost never helpful. However, it is also important to gently encourage children to use the potty and to establish routines in order for potty training to be successful.

We invite parents to let a child make the choice about when to wear underpants to school after he or she has been doing so at home. When children feel confident that they are in control, accidents

seem less traumatic. Be sure to tell your child's teacher when this change occurs. One can support children by letting them know that there are diapers in their personal baskets in case they feel they are not quite ready to go the whole day in underpants after all.

## Snack

**COVID Change:** At snack, children are seated about three feet apart.

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Snack times are pleasant, with an emphasis on conversation, manners, and social interactions. Snack is served twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Morning snack may be a group event, or children may be free to eat snack individually during work period. Snack is usually prepared by teachers ahead of time but is sometimes part of a food-preparation activity. Before preparing or eating any food, the children wash their hands. Children clean up after themselves.

Because some of our children have life-threatening allergies, we cannot allow parents to bring food for birthdays or other holiday events. Ingredients in cooking projects and all snack foods are carefully screened. In some classrooms we may ask parents to refrain from sending peanut butter.

Snack usually consists of one or more of the following: rice or corn cakes, fresh or dried fruit, vegetables, wheat crackers, soy butter, hummus, dry cereal, baked chips, water, or foods we have prepared. *Alternative snacks may be given to children with food allergies or other food restrictions. Please talk to your child's teacher if this is necessary.*

Food served at school is high-quality, nutritious, and as unprocessed as possible.

## Free Play

After snack, we enter a period of Free Play. Work Period cupboards are closed and cupboards with fresh activities are opened. During Free Play time, children have the chance to socialize in pairs and small groups. They enjoy activities such as playing dress-up in the doll corner, constructing train tracks and buildings, or pretending to be puppy dogs. Children also have the opportunity to play alone or snuggle up for a quiet time in the book corner.

Children are also free to go outside into our play yards after their snack, where they may engage in expansive play—running, jumping, climbing, and playing with balls. Our outdoor areas are filled with a variety of activities that include sand play, building with blocks, fantasy play, books, and art exploration. We also have fun with water when the weather permits.

## Noon: The End of the Official Preschool Day

The preschool day ends at noon, before lunch is served. Be sure to arrive on time to pick up your preschooler. Please do not linger with your child, as daycare starts at noon. Preschoolers who remain after 12 must be signed into aftercare, and their parents are billed accordingly. Please be sure to sign out *with your full name* on the roll sheet in your child's classroom and pick up your child's personal belongings. (See part 5, "[\*Dropping Off and Picking Up Your Child.\*](#)")

## Aftercare: 12–6:30

**COVID Change:** Aftercare in the preschool is noon till 5 p.m.

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### Lunch Time

Aftercare begins with lunch at noon. Our lunchtime routines are consistent and enjoyable. Children wash their hands, put out their own lunches, which they bring from home, on a paper placemat, and sit down for a grace that is sung before eating. Children are encouraged to eat their “protein first.” They’re asked to sit at the table until they are finished and then clear their places and wipe down the table. Once in a while, as a special occasion, parents are welcome to join their children for lunch.

Usually children take delight in opening their lunches and discovering what foods their parents have prepared for them. It is challenging to prepare nutritious, balanced, and appealing lunches five days a week. Children of all ages enjoy sandwiches, fruit, sliced vegetables, and juice or milk in their lunches. We are unable to heat foods, so please send items that are appealing at room temperature. A frozen juice pack or water bottle in the lunchbox that defrosts by lunch time both provides a cold drink and keeps meat and cheese fresh until eaten. Please do not send soft drinks for your child to have at school.

Communicating with your child about lunches is important. It is helpful to offer choices. When children are faced with foods they don’t like, teachers are placed in a difficult position. Portions are also important. We find it helpful when you send an amount of food that suits your child’s appetite in size and content and when you send foods that your child can handle, such as bite-sized sandwiches. Children who stay all day need extra food they can eat at the end of the day. If there is something in his lunch that your child doesn’t like, we suggest to him that he politely ask not to be given it again. Sometimes we help a child write a note home about a food he doesn’t like in case he forgets his reactions after a busy day.

Children three and under have a difficult time opening a lunchbox with the type of clasp that must be pried open. Their fingers are not strong enough. Clasps that snap open and shut (either metal or plastic) are much easier for them to handle. Plastic or cloth lunchboxes seem preferable to metal ones. They are long lasting, rustproof, and easy to clean. Because of space limitations, we ask that you not send Igloos or large lunch packs.

With lunch, as with dressing, toileting, and other self-care skills, we emphasize the satisfaction of independence. Each step is a separate skill that can be mastered with patience, guidance, and practice: opening lunch boxes; setting lunch out on the placemat; opening thermoses, bags, boxes, and prepared-food packages; packing leftovers back into lunch boxes and returning them to shelves; sponging the table; sweeping the floor—each skill is a new opportunity for mastery.

Any time we eat in preschool, wonderful opportunities for learning occur. Opportunities include the chance to practice table manners—saying “please” and “thank you,” chewing with closed mouths, speaking in a gentle, pleasant voice. Lunch is a time for conversation. It is a time when teachers can chat with the small group of children sitting at their tables.

## After Lunch: Aftercare

The afternoon program follows the natural rhythms of a child's day. After lunch there is a brief period of outdoor play (weather permitting) and then a nap or rest, depending on what you selected as the most helpful regular pattern for your child (*see "Nap/Rest Time," below*). After nap and rest there is a snack. The remainder of the day is spent in play, with group activities such as stories, art projects, games, music, and dancing.

### *Nap/Rest Time*

**COVID Change:** Children stay in their own rooms to nap and rest.

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**Nap time.** At 1 p.m. we put children who require a nap to sleep. During this time, teachers rub children's backs and quiet them.

Nap time lasts until about 3 p.m. As your child's sleep needs change, we can experiment with offering shorter sleep times as a prelude to becoming a rester. Teachers aren't able to keep children in the nap room if they repeatedly can't fall asleep and disturb other children.

Children who nap need to bring their bedding to school on Mondays. Our recommendations for bedding:

- Two small, lightweight blankets (or a blanket and a flat or fitted twin sheet); there are small sleeping bags on the market that are excellent for nap time
- A pillowcase in which to store blankets (clearly labeled with your child's first and last names)

State law requires that bedding be laundered once a week. We ask that you take your child's bedding home on Friday and return it Monday morning.

Other things you may wish to store with nap items:

- A small cuddly stuffed animal or other soft nap-time comfort object (with no rattle inside or moving parts)
- A small crib-sized pillow

In planning for nap items, please bear in mind that our storage space is limited. It is not possible for us to store fluffy comforters, large bed pillows, or large stuffed animals.

**Rest time.** Children who have outgrown the need to nap may be moved to a Rester Room with the consent of the teachers in charge. Rest time begins at 1 p.m. Resters lie on mats without blankets and listen quietly to stories for 30 to 45 minutes. After they get up, they have another hour of quiet play before the nappers awaken. You will know when your child is ready to give up the nap when it becomes increasingly difficult for him or her to fall asleep at night.

**From napper to rester.** If you would like to change your child from a napper to a rester, please talk to his teacher and follow up by filling out a Preschool Nap to Rest Change Form, which you'll find in the Office. Please give us a few days' notice to arrange for adequate staffing. If the Rester Rooms are full, we might not be able to accommodate your child immediately.

If you have special concerns about nap or rest time, please let us know.

## *Snack, Free Play, Circle*

After nap time, afternoon snack is served. Between 3 and 5 p.m., aftercare consists mainly of free play, with many activities to choose from. There are choices between indoor and outdoor play. During this busy time, loosely structured activities such as ball games, art activities, music, and special toys help focus children and provide a wonderful chance to play and explore friendships in a relaxed way.

# Clothing and Supplies

## The Well-Equipped Preschooler

Preparing your child for preschool can be a little like getting ready for summer camp. Here are a few tips on outfitting your child for the demands of a busy day in preschool.

Teachers will show you where to leave your child's belongings. Personal items go in your child's baskets. Lunches go on the designated shelves.

### *Clothing*

The motto of preschoolers could be "Let me do it." We suggest that all clothing be planned with independence in mind.

**Practical clothing.** Practical attire designed for running, jumping, climbing, painting, and playing is very helpful. Paint, mud, fruit juice, and chalk are all part of preschool life. Every effort is made to protect clothing. However, we suggest that your child wear washable, sturdy play clothes to make it easy to launder them when spills do happen.

**Clothes for "potty work."** Since young preschoolers are usually working on toileting, clothing that can be removed with ease is helpful. Overalls, pants with belts, and sun suits that button in the back are difficult for preschoolers to manage.

**Practical shoes.** We recommend that tennis shoes or other rubber-soled shoes be worn to school or be kept in your child's basket. Leather-soled sandals, party shoes, flip-flops, and cowboy boots are slippery and can be hazardous in wet weather and on nature walks and climbing structures. Often children in "slippery shoes" cannot go on walks because they are not able to keep up with the others. Heavy cowboy boots can also hurt other children. Backless shoes and sandals should not be worn at school.

**Weather-appropriate clothing.** The White Pony School is located in a valley that is usually a few degrees cooler or warmer than surrounding areas. A sweater or jacket for the changeable weather of fall and spring is important. Please provide a sun hat for sunny seasons. Each season has its own special clothing needs:

**Spring.** Mornings and late afternoons are often chilly. Please keep a labeled sweater, jacket, or sweat-shirt and a pair of long pants in your child's basket.

**Summer.** Shorts and sundresses are usually best. Occasionally we have overcast, chilly, windy days, so it's helpful to leave a sweater, jacket, or sweatshirt and a pair of long pants in your child's basket. Water play is a feature of the summer. Children may bring bathing suits or shorts to wear and a towel for water play. Please label these items. You'll receive a letter from your child's teachers about sunblock. Sunglasses can be brought to school but are easily mislaid.

**Fall and winter.** Layers that can be easily removed or added are best. It is most helpful to both children and teachers if the layers are pieces that the children can manage without help. A coat with a hood works better than a coat and hat.

**Rainy weather.** During the rainy season, we like to take the children outside, though we do not often take them into the rain. We recommend rain boots that can be worn all day, like shoes. Rubbers that must be pulled on over shoes are difficult to manage. A raincoat with a hood is helpful. Please do not bring umbrellas.

## Labeling Clothing and Personal Items

Preschoolers sometimes have trouble identifying their own clothing. Labeling all items with your child's name makes it possible for staff members to return them to you. Please remember that this includes jackets and shoes.

Items that become separated from their owners and aren't labeled go into Lost & Found.

## Personal Storage Baskets/Extra Clothing

**COVID Change:** Because they can't enter classrooms, parents aren't able to check their children's baskets to see if they need more extra clothes, diapers, or wipes. Teachers will communicate with parents about these needs, and parents should replenish supplies as soon as possible.

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Each child has a basket in which to store frequently needed extra clothing. We depend on your keeping the following items in this basket at all times:

- One complete change of clothing appropriate for the season (or two or three changes, if your child is in the early stage of potty training)
- A sweater or a sweatshirt
- Two or three sets of underwear and socks
- A spare pair of shoes

Wet clothing will be left in a plastic bag in your child's basket. If your child needs extra clothing and does not have any available, we will attempt to provide an item from extras on hand. Please wash and return loaned item to the classroom as soon as possible.

## Diapers and Wipes

Parents of children who are still in diapers are asked to supply diapers for their children. We use a communal supply of wipes. Please bring one box of non-scented wipes. When our supply runs low, we will request another box from each child's parents. *Please check your child's basket daily to ensure a plentiful supply of diapers and dry clothing.*

## Toys from Home

**COVID Change:** During the pandemic, “lovies” can’t travel between school and home. If you bring one to school, it needs to stay here for the rest of the week and be taken home with your child’s bedding.

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We do not allow children to bring toys from home. Toys and other personal items can cause arguments and competition. The best practice is to leave a toy in the car rather than bring it into the classroom. If an item does come in with you, please take it home or put it in your child’s cubby. Stuffed animals and other “lovies” brought for nap time are usually kept with the child’s bedding.

## Books from Home

**COVID Change:** For now, children aren’t allowed to bring books from home.

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Preschool children are encouraged to bring books to share. Books related to the class theme are wonderful for Circle Time, and good-quality books provide entertainment at rest time (if your child is a rester). Children look forward to rest time when they have a special book. Please remember to write your child’s name in any book he or she brings to school.





# School Safety Program

The Meher Schools has in place a comprehensive program to provide the safest possible environment for our students. It consists of

- A Child Safety Program, which is designed to protect students from physical and sexual abuse
- A Child Safety Task Force, consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators
- A School Safety Officer, who has overall responsibility for managing the safety program
- An Emergency Preparedness Plan to deal with earthquakes and other disasters
- A Physical Aggression Policy and Procedure for Students in Grades 1–5
- A Verbal and Social Aggression Policy and Procedure for Students in Grades 1–5

Addressing a wide array of concerns ranging from parking lot safety to name buttons to disaster preparedness, the safety program is managed by our school Safety Officers, Ivy Summers and Vince d'Assis.

**We encourage you to report to the Safety Officer any incident concerning the physical safety of our children that makes you uncomfortable or causes you concern.** We urge you to be candid and forthright about reporting. Every report will be taken seriously. We not only welcome you to report suspected incidents of child abuse, we count on you to do so. We have included a Parent/Employee Incident/Concern Report at the end of this chapter, which is used for this purpose.

We sincerely thank you for your dedicated efforts as partners in the process of protecting our children.

## Child Safety Program Overview

### Purpose and Scope

This document summarizes The Meher Schools' Child Safety Program designed to protect students from sexual and physical abuse. This program includes preventive measures such as standards of employee conduct, incident reporting and follow-up, ongoing monitoring, and staff training.

**The Meher Schools maintains a zero tolerance policy against sexual abuse and corporal punishment.** Legal definitions of each appear at the end of this document. Any report of an incident of sexual abuse or corporal punishment will result in the immediate removal of the alleged adult perpetrator from campus pending further investigation. Our *Code of Conduct*, attached to this document, outlines our policies and procedures regarding the sexual abuse of children and use of corporal punishment.

The school Safety Officer is responsible for the Child Safety Program. The role of Safety Officer may be filled by one or more school employees. This document uses the singular term "Safety

Officer” although the role may be held by two employees simultaneously. Our Safety Officers are Vince d’Assis and Ivy Summers.

## Involving Parents

Parents are actively encouraged to participate in the Child Safety Program. Parents who witness or become aware of a safety issue at school (including, but not limited to, sexual abuse or corporal punishment) are asked to fill out an Incident/Concern Report provided by The Meher Schools. This will be followed by a discussion with the Safety Officer, which will be held in as much confidence as is allowed by law. The Safety Officer will take appropriate action and follow up with parents. Any parent who wishes to join the school’s Child Safety Task Force should contact the Safety Officer at the school.

## Child Safety Program

The Meher Schools’ Child Safety Program includes the following sections. For the full policy for each of these sections, please contact the school’s Safety Officer.

### *Upholding the Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers*

The Meher Schools believes that strict adherence to the Code of Conduct functions as a preventive measure. The Meher Schools teachers, staff and volunteers are caregivers who are encouraged and trained to provide appropriate nurturance.

### *Screening of New Employees*

The Meher Schools considers thorough screening of prospective employees to be an important aspect of its Child Safety Program. Each prospective employee answers questions that emphasize the school’s attention to the issue of abuse and completes Livescan fingerprinting, and a criminal background check (performed by the Department of Justice and the FBI). No person will be hired if s/he has been convicted of a felony.

### *Training Staff*

Regular training is provided to staff and volunteers relating to applicable areas of child safety, including child abuse prevention. The goal of these trainings is to ensure that our staff are versed in a broad range of child safety issues and can act responsibly to protect our students and keep compliant with state and federal laws.

### *Monitoring Intern Staff*

Interns must be supervised by a regular staff member, must always work within view of their supervisors, and may never be left alone with children.

### *Limiting and Supervising Student Internet Access*

The Schools’ Internet Safety Policy is designed to protect students by limiting access to internet-connected computers and devices, and monitoring online activities of students. The policy also details how we notify parents of appropriate protective measures on their home devices.

## *Rigorously Following Up on Concerns Raised by Members of the School Community*

*Members of the school community are asked to immediately contact the Safety Officer regarding known or suspected child abuse.* The Meher Schools takes seriously the need for immediate, thorough, and documented action regarding concerns raised by a member of the school community. If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member or volunteer, the Safety Officer will escort the person off campus and direct him/her not to return (suspended with pay) pending further investigation. The Safety Officer will follow legal requirements for reporting known or suspected incidents of child abuse to Child Protective Services and/or the police. Information in the report will be held in as much confidence as is allowed by law.

Behaviors such as yelling, pushing, grabbing, and pulling, while not reportable under the California Penal Code, are unacceptable at The Meher Schools and will be corrected as soon as possible. Reports of inappropriate verbal or physical force will be documented and the complaint will be discussed with the employee. At both the elementary and preschool levels, the action taken by the Safety Officer will be based on the severity of the problem.

## *Team Approach*

The Safety Officer reports to, and works collaboratively with, the Meher Schools Board. One school board member serves as a Safety Liaison to the school Safety Officer.

## *Documenting Complaints and Interventions*

The Safety Officer ensures that any incident or report of suspected or known abuse is documented in accordance with the law and a report is given to licensing. In addition, the Safety Officer is responsible for the completeness of incident reports for all concerns.

## *Maintaining a Secure Campus*

The Meher Schools asks visitors to check in at the Office, and asks members of the school community to wear name badges.

## *Sex Offender Notification*

The Meher Schools does not allow registered sex offenders to chaperone field trips. The Safety Officer periodically checks the state website for registered sex offenders and provides information about the state website to parents and teachers.

## *Child-to-Child Abuse Prevention*

The Meher Schools maintains a zero tolerance policy toward child-to-child sexual abuse. Staff are required to report any event involving sexual play or activity to the Safety Officer, who will immediately assess the situation. Depending on its nature, child-to-child sexual behavior may result in a variety of interventions, up to and including termination of a child who abuses others from enrollment in The Meher Schools. The Meher Schools is not a therapeutic school, and we are limited as to what we can provide to help children who continue to exhibit inappropriate behavior. To see the complete child-to-child abuse prevention procedures, please ask the Safety Officer.

## Definitions

**Sexual Abuse:** According to California Penal Code section 11165.1, sexual abuse means sexual assault or exploitation.

*Sexual assault* is defined as inappropriate physical contact between adult and child. This includes, but is not limited to, touching genitalia or other intimate parts (breasts, inner thighs, and buttocks) or masturbation or exposing genitalia in the presence of a child.

*Sexual exploitation* includes, but is not limited to: conduct involving matter depicting a minor engaged in obscene acts, prostitution, live performances involving obscene sexual conduct by a minor, or other duplication or exchange of images of any kind of a child engaged in an act of obscene sexual conduct. In addition, The Meher Schools includes in its sexual abuse definition the removal of a child's clothing for purposes of sexual arousal. These guidelines exclude normal care-taking activities such as changing a preschooler's diaper, helping a child use the toilet, or performing a valid medical treatment.

**Corporal Punishment:** According to California Penal Code sections 11165.3 and 11165.4, corporal punishment is willfully using unnecessary physical force that causes a child unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering. This excludes force that is reasonable or necessary to quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to a person or to self; or damage to property; for purposes of self-defense; or to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects within control of the student.

### *Reviewing and Maintaining the Child Safety Program*

The Safety Officer is responsible for maintaining the Meher Schools' Child Safety Program, reviewing the program annually, and reporting to the Board. The Safety Officer, in collaboration with other school administrators, will advise the Meher Schools Board of Directors of needed changes.

Because circumstances and laws change, the policies and procedures outline herein may change or be amended from time to time. The Meher Schools reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies or portions of this Child Safety Program at any time and will provide employees with information and training as needed when changes occur.

# The Meher Schools Code of Conduct

## *Principles and Guidelines Governing Physical Interaction with Children at The Meher Schools*

- At The Meher Schools, there is ZERO TOLERANCE for sexual abuse.
- At The Meher Schools, there is ZERO TOLERANCE for corporal punishment.

### **General**

*No employee or volunteer shall engage in inappropriate physical intimacy with or touching of a child.*

*No employee or volunteer should be alone with ONE student in a classroom or other closed area at any time during the day. This includes before class, during breaks and lunch and after school. This includes, but is not limited to, laundry rooms, restrooms, offices, the library, the shop, the theater, janitorial closets, supply closets, science closet, cargo containers, sheds, etc.*

Staff members and volunteers should not be alone with a child; this includes being out of view from others or in a closed space.

It is OK to be alone with two or more students, and it is OK to walk with one student down the hall. You should come to the aid of a student who is hurt who happens to be alone inside a room.

If you need to help a child with a bathroom problem, get another adult or child to accompany you so that you are not alone with the child.

Should you find yourself in a situation where you are speaking with one student in an out-of-view or closed space, you can step outside the room. If it is necessary to remain indoors because of the weather, leave the door open so that you and the child are in clear view.

There are exceptions to this rule in the case of testing, tutoring, or other activities (such as speech therapy) where the isolation of the adult and student is necessary for the successful implementation of the activity. Any such exceptions should be discussed, cleared, and documented with the Safety Officer before they take place.

These guidelines pertain to staff conduct; they do not apply to student-to-student behavior. We do not want to disallow developmentally-appropriate affection expressed between peers.

### **Child Safety Program**

The Meher Schools Code of Conduct is an integral part of the Meher Schools Child Safety Program. They are complementary aspects of our efforts to create a safe and nurturing environment for our students.

## ***Discipline***

Our goal is to nurture a child's natural ability for self control and self discipline. This ability includes joining others in play and work, not disrupting the group, and learning the basic guidelines for loving interaction. We hope to provide a structure and a framework that allows children to work and play together harmoniously and cooperatively.

The staff member or volunteer must be the living example of the behavior we hope the children will imitate and acquire.

The environment is prepared to invite and allow children to be fully engaged in activities that are fun and absorbing. Many children respond easily to the environment of our school and appreciate the structure, guidelines, limits, and high expectations for their behavior. Most children do not continue to be "behavior problems" when given loving respect and individual attention, which enable them to try new ways to behave and that support their new learning.

We recommend to parents, teachers, and volunteers the book *Who's in Control?* by Susan Isaacs. Ms. Isaacs suggests offering children choices, coupled with logical consequences for their decisions. We also try to put into practice the methods developed by Howard Glasser in *The Nurtured Heart* approach. We find that these ideals reflect our own view of loving discipline and offer concrete and helpful suggestions on how to effectively handle day-to-day situations with children and how to begin to reverse long-standing problems. These books can be purchased from *Amazon.com* or borrowed from the preschool director or an elementary school co-principal.

If a child does not respond easily to our environment, we work to help him or her find alternative ways of expressing him/herself that are not harmful or hurtful to others. Hitting is not acceptable behavior; the child needs to learn that s/he can express him/herself with words. When a child is having difficulties, we consult with his/her parents to discover together ways in which we might be helpful. When appropriate, we might recommend a referral to outside services such as evaluation or counseling.

Our policy regarding corporal punishment is clear:

- *Corporal punishment of any kind is against the law.*
- *Our own views do not allow corporal punishment of any kind.*
- *Children can be disciplined in a loving and gentle and effective manner, free from the use of physical force or power by adults.*
- *We use praise to support growth in a positive direction.*
- *We do not yell at, shame, humiliate, or intimidate a child.*

***Inappropriate verbal behavior.*** Employees are expected to speak to children in respectful ways. This means that threatening, yelling, shaming or humiliating, and name-calling are considered inappropriate and are not allowed. Yelling at children may be a precursor to physical action against children and is treated as a breach of appropriate conduct.

***Inappropriate use of physical force.*** No employee or volunteer shall inflict corporal punishment upon a student. This includes hitting or slapping a child. In addition to behaviors specified in California Penal Code sections 11165.3 and 11165.4, The Meher Schools does not permit the use of physical force such as grabbing, pushing, pulling, or restricting the movement of a child (except in cases where the child is a danger to him/herself or to another person, or poses serious damage to property). Penal Code sections can be found starting at the following link, which is

up-to-date as of the date of approval of this document:

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&sectionNum=11164](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN&sectionNum=11164).

In brief, the use of physical force to obtain a behavioral goal is completely unacceptable. It is not legal or acceptable for teachers/staff or volunteers to handle children roughly in the course of guiding or disciplining them. Because this principle is so important to the creation of an environment that supports our goals, any report of possible misconduct in regard to this principle will be fully investigated and documented in the staff member's or volunteer's file.

Community Care Licensing describes clearly their mandate that all children be accorded the following personal rights:

*To be free from corporal or unusual punishment, infliction of pain, humiliation, intimidation, ridicule, coercion, threat, mental abuse, or other actions of a punitive nature including but not limited to: interference with functions of daily living including eating, sleeping or toileting, or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication, or aids to physical functioning.*

### ***Physical Expression of Affection for Preschoolers and Kindergartners***

We start the day with hugs or a handshake. Young children need comfort, and being held by a sympathetic adult can restore feelings of balance and safety. Holding can also be the most helpful way to encourage attachment to a staff member or volunteer and to facilitate the separation process from the parent in the morning. Here are some examples of appropriate physical intimacy with preschoolers and kindergartners:

- Shaking hands or hugging
- Picking up
- Holding
- Rocking
- Rubbing a child's head or back (on top of the child's clothes) to comfort a child or help the child fall asleep at nap time

We ask that all our staff and volunteers incorporate the following guidelines in their interactions with children in preschool and kindergarten:

- Do not express affection by kissing the children.
- Men do not change children's diapers or help children use the toilet.
- Men do not apply sunblock to children's bodies.
- Never force affection onto a child, but instead respond to the child's need for comfort and holding.
- Children should be gently discouraged from vying for an adult's lap.
- Do not give children piggyback rides.
- Do not tickle.
- In all situations, please be sensitive to how you touch children and how it might look to others.

## ***Physical Expression of Affection for First through Fifth Grade Children***

Please continue our practice of welcoming the children each morning with a handshake as they enter the classroom.

Here are some examples of appropriate physical intimacy with elementary children:

- Shaking hands
- Putting your arm around a child in response to the child's need for comfort.
- Patting a shoulder
- Crouching near or sitting next to a child

It also seems important to set some guidelines for staff members and volunteers about inappropriate physical expression of affection with students. Normal physical affection and playfulness can be easily misunderstood. Male staff members are especially vulnerable. We ask that all our staff and volunteers incorporate the following guidelines in their interactions with children in grades one through five:

- Do not allow children to sit on your lap.
- Do not allow children to jump on you.
- Do not give children piggyback rides.
- Do not tickle.
- In all situations, please be sensitive to how you touch children and how it might look to others.

## ***Mandated Reporting***

All employees are "mandated reporters" as described in California Penal Code section 11165.7, and as such are obligated by law to report known or suspected incidents of sexual abuse or corporal punishment between any adult (including fellow employees) and a child. (The same is true of all forms of child abuse and neglect, as described in California Penal Code section 11165.6 and in the mandated reporter training required for all employees.)

If you think a staff member, substitute, or volunteer is inappropriate in his/her physical contact with children, inform the Safety Officer right away, either in person or in writing at the time the incident is observed or made know. Your report is important in insuring the safety of our children. Good communication helps to protect all concerned.

*Revision approved by the board of directors, September 9, 2017*

## **Child Safety Task Force**

The Meher Schools Child Safety Task Force includes parents, teachers, staff, and administrators. The Task Force is one of the channels of communication between parents and the school regarding safety concerns. The Task Force addresses topics pertaining to child safety, including emergency preparedness, child abuse prevention, campus security, physical plant safety, and student physical and social aggression. The Child Safety Task Force meets annually to update its

action plan and review actions taken; other meetings are scheduled as needed. New members are welcome. Anyone wishing to join the Task Force may e-mail Ivy Summers at [ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org) or Vince d'Assis at [vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org).

## School Safety Officers

Safety issues that may arise during the day-to-day operation of the school include, but are not limited to, any concern for the safety of children under our care and concerns about issues that pose possible liability to the school. Our school Safety Officers are the point of contact for all safety matters that arise at The Meher Schools. Our Safety Officers are Vince d'Assis ([vince@meherschools.org](mailto:vince@meherschools.org)) and Ivy Summers ([ivy@meherschools.org](mailto:ivy@meherschools.org)).

## Emergency Preparedness Plan

The Meher Schools maintains a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan. This plan provides procedures for responding to emergency situations including fires, medical emergencies, intruders, and earthquakes. The plan is updated annually to reflect changes in emergency team membership and is reviewed biannually by the Child Safety Task Force. Any stakeholder may view the plan upon request. Please e-mail School Safety Officers Ivy Summers or Vince d'Assis for further information.

In the event of a school-wide emergency (such as a natural disaster), which parents might learn of from media reports or from other parents, we ask that parents wait for communication from the school via *eNotes* or telephone rather than calling or going directly to their child's classroom. Students will not be released from classrooms until we verify that it is safe to do so and the adult picking up a child has been verified by our Emergency Student Release Team.

## Other Resources

Parents may wish to learn more about child abuse prevention and playdate safety. Two resources are listed below. A School Safety Officer will provide hard copies upon request.

- Tip Sheet: "Don't Wait—Everyday Actions to Keep Kids Safe"  
[www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-4](http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-4)
- An article about playdate safety is at the end of this section.

## Handling Physical Aggression in Preschool

Included in the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results for Meher Schools students are:

- Learning self-discipline and self-control
- Developing love, tolerance, and respect for others.

In preschool, children are learning to communicate with others in words, rather than pushing, grabbing, or even biting when they are upset. Although these spontaneous behaviors are considered part of typical development, aggressive incidents are taken seriously in our preschool.

Teachers work proactively to prevent any form of physical aggression during conflicts by helping children to negotiate or separating children in order to calm them. They also use the Nurtured Heart Approach to recognize children's growing abilities to communicate with words and to self-regulate when upset. These incidents are handled by close supervision, coordination between teachers, and loving encouragement and support.

However, if children develop a pattern of physical aggression in preschool, teachers will call a conference with parents, which will include the preschool director. The director and teachers will collaborate with parents to set up a behavior plan for the child. The school may want to invite a consultant to work with the teachers and the parents. Children who hurt another child more than once on any given day or engage in a serious act of aggression may have to be sent home in ensure the safety of all the children.

## Physical Aggression Policy: Grades 1–5

Included in the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results for Meher Schools students are:

- Learning self-discipline and self-control
- Developing love, tolerance, and respect for others.

In this environment, physical aggression is not acceptable. Physically aggressive behavior is extremely disruptive to the peaceful and harmonious environment we want to achieve. It is upsetting to other children and, in extreme cases, might put other children at risk of harm. When staff members have to deal with physically aggressive behavior, they are less free to concentrate on the development of academic and social skills with their students.

Students who repeatedly hit, push, punch, kick, shove, pinch, poke, pull, slap, or commit any other act of physical aggression upon another person will be helped in every way possible to learn non-aggressive ways to express their feelings. These procedures are implemented with the expectation that once a student truly understands that physical aggression is not acceptable and begins to learn and practice other ways of relating, he or she has a better chance of changing aggressive patterns.

Our goal is not to punish children but to help them recognize their anger and to learn to channel their aggressive energy into constructive behavior. If we find that we are not able to provide the help a child needs, we will work with parents to place the student in an environment in which the student can receive the help he or she needs to progress.

The Meher Schools is not a therapeutic school, and we are limited as to what we can provide to help children with behavioral difficulties. If it becomes clear that a child cannot, in our professional judgment, respond positively to the help we can provide and to the environment of the school, then the administration will work with the parents to place the student in an academic environment in which the student can receive the help he or she needs.

Contact the Safety Officer for details about school procedures for responding to aggression.

*Approved by the board of directors, August 2006*

# Verbal and Social Aggression Policy: Grades 1–5

## Policy Statement

Included in the expected school-wide learning results for Meher Schools students are

- Learning self-discipline and self-control
- Practicing respect, kindness, tolerance, and cooperation.

Both these expectations require children to learn kind ways of interacting, without the use of verbal aggression. We work with students to learn developmentally appropriate ways of speaking respectfully with one another. We help students learn to cooperate with their peers and to take the initiative in helping younger children.

We define verbal and social aggression as patterns of intentionally interacting with other students in ways that harm the students' relationships and feelings of acceptance. Verbal and social aggression can include but are not limited to name calling, spreading rumors, threatening, and playing harmful practical jokes.

We discourage the use of hurtful remarks in various ways, which change as children grow and learn. These include: modeling appropriate language; discussing social issues in morning meetings in classrooms; establishing classroom expectations for appropriate and inappropriate language; helping students establish classroom guidelines for behavior; and providing friendship groups at other grade levels as needed.

We expect students to treat each other with kindness. We also understand that differentiating different kinds of peer relationships (such as close friendships vs. acquaintances) is part of normal development. Our expectation is that students will learn to interact respectfully with each other at all times.

Contact the Safety Officer for details about school procedures for responding to aggression.

*Approved by the board of directors, August 2011*

**COVID Change:** During the pandemic, we ask that children not have in-person play dates. See the October 7, 2020, *Wednesday Messages* for a “virtual” version of this article.

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**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Ensuring Your Child’s Safety on Play Dates*

**F**OR THE PAST several years, The Meher Schools has focused special attention on our Child Safety Program. We have updated our safety policies, created a system of identification badges, put up new gates and signs, and offered workshops to parents and staff. Now we would like to address some specific concerns about the safety of our students when they are *not* at school.

Parents often ask me questions about sending their children on play dates. Understandably, they wonder about allowing their children to go into the home of a family they don’t know well, even when the family is a member of the Meher Schools community.

The steady stream of requests to arrange play dates poses special challenges for parents. They want their children to have friends, but ensuring responsible supervision for their children is their highest priority.

Although as teachers we often discuss children’s social interests with parents, *we are not in a position to evaluate the safety of situations outside of our school.* As you know, our school cannot protect the Meher Schools’ children during the hours they are not on our campus. And so it is up to parents to make sure their children are safe, even on play dates with children they have met at our school.

Still, children’s independence should be explored, ideally gradually, with parents staying visible and readily available to guide, help, and protect. I know how bewildering this challenge can be. In this mobile age when parents may not have the support of extended family nearby, making connections with others is important.

At the same time, our busy lives in an urban environment often keep us from getting to know people in our community well. That is why we want to suggest important guidelines for responding to requests for your child to visit or stay in a friend’s home.

### *Play Date Guidelines*

Here are some guidelines that, as a parent, and as a teacher who has dealt with a wide variety of family social situations, make good sense to me:

- *Do not allow your child to go alone on a play date or overnight in a home where you do not know the parents, siblings, and the environment well.* No matter how delightful the invitation, the reality is you are entrusting your child to this family’s care. It makes sense to be certain you are fully aware whom your child will encounter (parents, older brothers and sisters, people who come into the home) during a visit *without you present.* You also need to



find out who will be supervising your child while you are away. In other words, you should know the family well and feel unhesitating, comfortable, and certain about your child's safety.

- *Set up play dates as family social events.* Set up play dates as family social events. Start by having a family play date where members of your family socialize with members of the play date family. When families get together, children aren't pressured to venture alone into unfamiliar settings. Casual socializing with other parents also allows you to get to know family members, their lifestyles, and their home environments. Establishing careful patterns with your children when they are first exploring independence builds a context for safety in the future. In early adolescence, requests for time away from home multiply. Using thoughtfulness and care now creates a foundation for social guidelines in the future.
- *Make a plan for communicating with your children when they are away from home.* Don't feel awkward about calling to speak with children at someone else's home. You can let the host know ahead of time that you will be phoning. Make calling a condition of sending your child on a sleepover. When you do call, check in to see whether your child is happy and whether your help is needed. In addition, teach children how to call you—and encourage them to contact you if they feel uncomfortable.
- *Check Megan's List online* ([www.meganslaw.ca.gov](http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov)). Information on the identity and whereabouts of registered sex offenders is now available to you by the individual's name, city, or zip code at this Internet site. Megan's List is not intended to further punish child offenders but to provide helpful information so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's activities, such as play dates. In light of this, it is up to parents to learn of known child offenders. You now have the ability to protect your children from unsupervised contact with people who have a known history of child sexual abuse. We recommend that you refer to Megan's List periodically. Other valuable information about maintaining child safety is also available at the Megan's List Web site.

I appreciate your willingness to join us in our ongoing concern for child safety. Thank you for considering this information carefully.

*Susie Kohl is White Pony director and the author of numerous books and articles on parenting and child development.*

