

Metropolitan Montessori School  
Parent Handbook

## Arrival

Upper Elementary arrival time is 7:55 a.m. Students may enter beginning at 7:50 a.m., and they will be marked late after 8:00 a.m. Siblings of UE students may be dropped off at no charge starting at 8:00 a.m. Lower Elementary arrival is 8:30 to 8:45 a.m. LE children will be marked late after 8:45 a.m. Siblings of LE children can be dropped off at no charge starting at 8:35 a.m. Primary arrival is 8:45 to 9 a.m. The front door is closed at 9 a.m., and parents will bring their children to the front desk so that we can record their late arrival and accompany them to class.

## Attendance

Regular attendance and timeliness are important for your child's performance in school. Absences for reasons other than illness are strongly discouraged. Parents should schedule vacations to coincide with school closings. School policy does not allow for family vacations to be extended into classroom time unless discussed with the head of school or associate head of school at least two weeks beforehand. Doctor appointments should not be scheduled during school hours. Absences and tardiness are recorded, and part of the student record. If your child is absent for any reason, please send an email to your child's classroom teacher.

## Before and After School Programs

MMS offers numerous enrichment programs as well as early drop-off before school, beginning at 8 a.m., and after-school clubhouse until 6 p.m. There is an additional charge for these programs. Lori Joachim, the information coordinator, oversees these offerings. Details are available on the MMS website. Go to Resources > Downloads> and look for "forms for parents."

## Birthdays

In Primary, teachers invite parents into the classroom to celebrate the child's birthday. The tradition is described in the Primary Guide for Parents. In Lower Elementary, the students share a time line of their life with their classmates. Birthdays are not observed in Upper Elementary. Please do not distribute birthday invitations or thank you notes at school or ask the school staff to do this for you. Please do not send treats to schools for birthdays. Please see "Lunch and Snack" below.

## Business hours

The school's business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; information may be left at the front desk with the receptionist between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

## Cell phones at school

MMS discourages the use of cell phones and other electronic devices by students. Cell phones may be used only after the end of the school day, and otherwise must be turned off and kept in backpacks. Parents who need to contact their children in an emergency should call Alicia Abel, the school receptionist, at 212-579-5525, ext. 0. If cell phones

are used inappropriately during school hours, the phones will be confiscated by the classroom teacher and parents will be notified.

## Classroom assignments

The head of school and associate head of school determine classroom assignments in consultation with classroom teachers, coordinators, and the admissions director. Factors in the decision include the child's emotional, social, and academic needs; the social mix in the current classes; the gender ratios; and balance of grade levels in the division.

## Clothing at school

Attire is required to be neat, clean, and appropriate for the occasion of being at school. Revealing, ripped, or cut-off clothing is not acceptable. MMS reserves the right to send home students who are inappropriately dressed. Proper footwear is particularly important. Students must wear sneakers or regular shoes; sandals, flip flops, Crocs, clogs, and other backless shoes are not allowed because they pose a danger on the stairs.

- Indoor shoes. In Primary, children wear slippers in the classroom; Elementary students are advised to wear indoor shoes during the winter months and keep boots in lockers.
- Recess. All children go outside every day, and fresh air and exercise is important even in cold weather. Children need to wear hats, gloves, scarves, and sweaters or coats depending on the time of year. Be sure your child's clothing is labeled.
- PE uniform. Beginning in first grade, students are required to wear the PE uniform on days when they have physical education. An order form for PE clothes is available on the website. If the students have a performance or special event on the same day as gym class, they should dress appropriately for the event and change into their PE uniform before gym.
- Black Rock Forest. Students traveling to Black Rock Forest should wear heavy shoes or boots, and warm clothing, including hats and gloves. The conditions in the forest may be colder and wetter than in the city.
- Special school events: Elementary students should have a white shirt or top, dark skirt or trousers, and appropriate footwear for concerts, curriculum celebrations, and other special occasions.

## Communication

MMS communicates with parents in numerous ways.

- **A schoolwide email**, The Friday Flyer, is sent every week with important announcements.
- The **website**, <http://www.mmsny.org>, lists school events, policies, the lunch menu, and admissions and financial aid links. It has information about the educational program, the Board of Trustees, and the Parents Association. It also has a link for online donations to the school's Annual Fund. The website links to Facebook and Twitter, where MMS posts brief announcements about school activities.

- A searchable **family directory** is available on the school's database, which can be accessed through the 325 icon on the school's website after parents log in.
- **Schoolwide publications** are produced during the year to report on new developments and topics of community interest.
- **Classroom observations** are scheduled twice a year in Primary, and once a year in Lower Elementary. Upper Elementary does not have scheduled observations, but parents may request to observe at any time. Primary parents also are encouraged to arrange observations for their caregivers.
- **Parent-teacher conferences** are held twice a year. Parents or teachers may request additional meetings if needed.
- **Year-end reports** are issued for Extended Day, Lower Elementary, and Upper Elementary students. Midyear reports are given in Upper Elementary. Grades begin in fifth grade.
- **Curriculum nights** for each division are scheduled in the fall, and lay out the academic program and expectations for the year. Parents are expected to attend.
- **Parent Education programs** are scheduled throughout the year and address a range of topics related to parenting, education, and diversity.
- **Tours** for current parents are held before second-year Primary students move to Extended Day, Extended Day students move to Lower Elementary, and third-grade students move to Upper Elementary.
- **Individual** concerns about a child's development/performance, family matter, or parenting issue should be directed to the child's teachers. You may leave a phone message during school hours, or send an email by using the first initial and last name of the teacher (example: [bsmith@mmsny.org](mailto:bsmith@mmsny.org)). Teachers should acknowledge a phone call or email within 24 hours. Significant concerns will be addressed in scheduled meetings. Primary parents may follow up with Bertica Spencer, the Primary division coordinator; and Lower and Upper Elementary parents may follow up with Associate Head of School Bob Reveri.
- Other matters may be directed to the school's administration:
  - Alicia Abel, the receptionist, is the MMS "help desk."
  - Lori Joachim, the information coordinator, can answer questions about schedules, policies, procedures, and the Before and After School program.
  - Fred Antonoff, the business manager, can answer questions about tuition and billing.
  - Heidi Morrison, the admissions director, handles queries about admissions and financial aid.
  - Lila Locksley, the communications director, can answer questions about school publications and the website.
  - Brenda Mizel, the head of school, is available to talk to parents about any subject. Parents may email Brenda at [bmizel@mmsny.org](mailto:bmizel@mmsny.org). If you need to speak to her, call 212-579-5525, ext. 0.

## Community

In its mission and diversity statements, MMS seeks to create a nurturing community where all children feel safe, physically and emotionally. We expect all members of our community to help foster a school climate that is respectful to all children and adults, that

preserves the confidentiality of individuals, and that respects the reputations of individuals and the institution.

## Dismissal times

Primary: Monday through Friday, 12:15 p.m.

Extended Day and Afternoon Program:

Monday through Thursday, 2:45 p.m.

Friday, 1:45 p.m.

Lower Elementary:

Monday through Thursday, 3:15 p.m.

Friday, 2 p.m.

Upper Elementary:

Monday through Thursday, 3:30 p.m.

Friday, 2:15 p.m.

After-School programs: Dismissal times vary according to the class.

Clubhouse: 6 p.m.

Please refer to the calendar on the MMS website for schoolwide, early-dismissal days.

## Dismissal

We ask that parents and caregivers abide by the following procedures:

- Observe the appropriate dismissal times so that the sidewalk does not become congested.
- Watch the children when they are outside the building. Especially at the end of the day, the children may be excited and inattentive to the safety of others. Children on scooters should be watched closely, especially on the crowded sidewalk. Parents and caregivers are expected to leave the grounds promptly when the children leave the building, supervise the children, and be respectful of the school's neighbors and pedestrians on the sidewalk.
- Send a written note if the child will be going home with someone not authorized by the parents for regular pickups. The school will not release a child to someone who has not been authorized in writing from the parent.
- Pick up children promptly. Please call the school if you will be late for pickup. Younger children can become anxious when their parent/caregiver is late. A late fee may be charged if a child is not picked up on time.

## Emergency school closings

Families and staff members will be notified of school closing for snow days through the school's automated telephone-calling system. The information will also be posted on the school's website, Facebook, and Twitter, and communicated via email. Please do not call the school.

## Exmissions

Bob Reveri, the associate head of school, oversees exmissions for Upper Elementary students. Heidi Morrison, the admissions director, handles exmissions for Primary and

Lower Elementary. All forms should be directed to Lori Joachim, the information coordinator.

## Field trips

Beginning in Extended Day, students make numerous field trips during the school year to Black Rock Forest and other venues in the New York metropolitan area. Third graders take two overnight trips, one in the fall and one in the spring. Upper Elementary takes a two-night trip in the spring. Other overnight trips may be scheduled depending on that year's curriculum. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and respectful manner, cooperating with safety instructions, listening to teachers and outside educators, and behaving in a considerate way. Students who have had repeated discipline problems may not be allowed to take part in field trips, and those issues will be discussed with parents beforehand. It is very important that parents are familiar with the school calendar on the school's website, and that they know when field trips are scheduled for their children so that the children can follow the specific requirements for the trip. If parents have any questions or concerns about a trip, they should contact the classroom teacher.

## Food and nut allergies

For the protection of our students with severe nut allergies, MMS prohibits nut products in the school. The school's snacks and lunches are made without peanuts, tree nuts, or any nut-based products, and families are instructed not to send items to school containing nuts. Parents who have children with food allergies are encouraged to work closely with their classroom teachers, Chef Chris Canty, and Lori Joachim, the information coordinator, so we can anticipate the needs of the children.

## Family directory

A searchable, online school directory is available through a link on the school's website. Eventually, parents will be able to create class lists through this directory; in the interim, class lists and directories by classroom are listed on the website. Go to Resources > Downloads > and look for class directories.

## Fundraising

MMS relies on three principal sources of income: tuition, unrestricted giving (Annual Fund and Spring Benefit) and income from endowment. The Annual Fund is the school's primary fundraising activity, and strives for 100 percent participation. It provides unrestricted support for the school's basic operations, including academic resources and financial aid. An Annual Fund committee of parents reaches out to fellow parents about this effort. The Parents Association also sponsors a Spring Benefit to support the school. Online contributions may be made to the school by going to the Support page of the website.

## Grace & Courtesy

This is a concept that Maria Montessori developed to acknowledge the importance of decorum in conducting oneself in school and in the outside world. One of the goals of MMS is to cultivate a sense of mutual respect, cooperation, personal responsibility, and consideration within our students. Teachers guide children to help them develop inner discipline. Therefore the child has the freedom to learn, with teacher support, from his or her own experience what behavior works best. If a student's behavior is not acceptable, the child is helped to see that this behavior has consequences. When an action might be harmful to the child or to others, the consequence is a request to end the behavior or to be removed from the situation. The teacher explains to the child that our concern is for the welfare of all children and discusses the appropriate behavioral responses to a given situation. If a child persists in a behavior that is perceived to endanger himself/herself or others, parents will be called to take the child home.

## Health

MMS encourages children to develop healthy habits by promoting frequent hand washing; teaching nutrition, safety, and wellness habits; and discussing the importance of regular bed times and sufficient sleep. If your child suddenly becomes ill, the school will notify you or your emergency contact so that your child can go home. Your child may return to school when he or she has been fever-free for 24 hours without medication. If your child needs to take medication at school, you must complete a medication release form, which is available on the website. It is against New York State Law for children to self-medicate at school. If your child has a contagious condition (strep, lice, pink eye, etc.) please contact the school so that other parents can be alerted. More information about the school's health policies may be found on the MMS website, under Resources > Downloads.

## Holidays and gifts

Part of the school's ethic of promoting grace and courtesy is to thank people for their efforts. Therefore, we encourage families to express their appreciation with cards, letters, or simple homemade gifts. Another way for parents to show appreciation to the teachers is through a donation to the professional development fund. Room Parents organize a year-end gift for the classroom teachers.

## Homework

Homework is introduced gradually in first grade. Children should do their homework independently; however, parents are encouraged to read with their children regularly to foster a love of reading and discussion. If children experience difficulties with their homework, parents should contact the classroom teacher. A more detailed explanation of the school's homework philosophy can be found in the Lower and Upper Elementary curriculum guides.

## Lost and Found

Lost items are placed in a bin in the vestibule of the school. Please make sure all of your child's belongings are clearly marked with his or her name. Items that are not claimed after several months are donated to charity.

## Lunch/ Snacks

The school provides a nutritious snack and appropriate beverage every day. The school has an optional lunch program that is served in the classroom. Menus are posted on the school website. Please do not send in candy, chips, cake, pies, cookies, etc., for your child or the class.

## MetroCards

Beginning in first grade, students may be eligible for reduced-fare MetroCards from the New York City Department of Education if they live more than six blocks from school. The guidelines are posted on the school website. Parents may consult Alicia Abel, the school receptionist, about how to obtain a card.

## Parents Association

All parents are members of the Parents Association and encouraged to volunteer for its committees and attend events. The Parents Association meets monthly and organizes numerous events for the school, including parent cocktail parties, the annual book fair, a parent social, and a spring benefit. Volunteer room parents are assigned to each classroom to foster communication and a sense of community.

## Photography

A professional photographer takes individual portraits and class pictures every fall. Upon review, they may be purchased or returned without charge. The photo appears in the school's yearbook. Teachers and administrators may take photographs in the classrooms as part of the school's communications effort. Parents may NOT take photographs during their classroom observations. Flash photography during school productions is not allowed.

## School productions

The Upper Elementary play and other school productions are designed to teach theater skills, helping students improve their ability to express themselves in a public forum and to work together in a creative collaboration. Children who have roles in these productions are expected to meet rehearsal requirements and attend the programs. Attendance and participation in these programs are mandatory and absences, except in the case of illness, will not be accepted.

## Technology: Acceptable Use Policy

Upper Elementary students and their parents must sign the Acceptable Use Policy in order for students to work on MMS computers and use the school's network. Students who violate this policy will lose the privilege of using the school's computer resources.

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