



# Parent Handbook

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[www.tls.mdpc.org](http://www.tls.mdpc.org)

## LICENSED BY TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

### PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The Little School believes every child is unique and each child should be allowed to grow at his or her own rate. We plan a balance of self-directed and teacher-directed activities that aid children in growing physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Our staff members serve as positive role models; they provide care that is supportive, nurturing, warm, and responsive to your child's individual needs. We strive to create an environment in which children develop a good self-image and a sense of self-worth.

We help each child grow physically by using developmentally appropriate toys in the classroom; planning both gross motor and fine motor activities; and including outside or gym time in each daily plan.

We promote social skills by planning group activities that involve interaction and sharing, modeling appropriate behavior, praising good behavior, and redirecting inappropriate behavior.

We build each child's self-esteem by using positive reinforcement to shape behavior and skills; showing our acceptance of diversity and creativity in the classroom; and encouraging each child to develop his/her God-given gifts.

We encourage each child to grow spiritually by saying grace before snacks and meals, singing Christian songs, reading Christian books, and celebrating Christian holidays during the school year.

The Little School program at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church is an extension of the Christian Education ministry of the church. Here, we realize and embrace that the early years of life are the most important for laying the foundations of faith, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

### STATE LICENSING

The Little School at MDPC is licensed by the State of Texas' Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to provide care for 135 children daily who are 3 months through 3 years. As a licensed facility, we operate using the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers as a basic guideline for setting policy and procedures. A copy of the Minimum Standards is available through the school office and online at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us). Parents are welcome to review the State Minimum standards, and the center's most recent Licensing inspection report at anytime. The report is posted outside of the THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC office, and the Standards can be obtained by asking the office staff.

The address of the local Licensing office is PO Box 16017, Houston, Texas, 77222-6017 and the phone number of our licensing representative is 713-940-5283. The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252-5400. You may also report suspected abuse or neglect at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).

## ELIGIBILITY AND ADMISSION

*Educational child care is available to any family in the church or community without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry.*

At The Little School, enrollment is ongoing. This means that new families may submit registration applications throughout the school year. The Little School at MDPC will only accept online registrations through the MDPC website. A registration fee is to be paid at the time of online registration. Families with children **currently enrolled** will register online beginning in **February** for the following school year.

Families who **do not currently** have a child at the school may begin their online registration in **the fall** for the following school year. Once placement for currently enrolled children and their siblings has been completed in February, new family applications will be placed, in the order that they were received, as follows:

### **Current Families and their Siblings**

- ✝ Currently enrolled, MDPC members
- ✝ Currently enrolled, NON - MDPC members

### **New Families**

- ✝ Children of MDPC members
- ✝ Children who have had siblings at the school in the past (Legacy)
- ✝ Children who are new to the school

**Admission and class placement are at the sole and absolute discretion of the Director, applying the policies approved by the Little School Parent Advisory Committee.**

When placement is completed and classes are filled, remaining applications will be placed on a waiting list in the same priority as above. Families will be notified as soon as a space becomes available. Any applications received after the placement date will be placed on a first come, first serve basis.

Although each child is admitted by chronological age, every effort will be made to meet the emotional, social, intellectual and physical needs of the individual child on a developmental basis. We reserve the right to assess each child's developmental needs before and during enrollment to confirm the proper placement of each child. Proper placement allows us the opportunity to give maximum consideration for each child's individual needs. The majority of the classrooms have a six month age spread allowing for developmentally appropriate teaching.

Once the child has been placed in the school, the enrollment application will be reviewed for completeness, the monthly tuition fee will be identified, and a confirmation letter will be sent. The parents and child are encouraged to tour the center and to spend time in the classroom and meet the prospective teachers. Tours are offered by appointment only while the classes are in session.

When a child is placed or enrolled in a class, the staff will make every attempt to arrange for your child to visit the school before his/her first day. This visit is to allow the child to see his/her new teacher in the context of his/her own classroom and to get acquainted to his/her new surroundings. The classroom visit is not used as a basis of selection in any way, but serves the child well in working through an adjustment period in his/her new school. You may visit the campus to observe your own

child and/or program activities at any time. To gain admission to the classroom, you must first come to the Little School office.

A child with **special needs** will be evaluated by parents, consultants, and staff to see if the school can be beneficial to him/her. The Director will recommend to the Parent Advisory Committee action to be taken on each request for the enrollment of a special needs child, if necessary. We will make any necessary modifications for each child with special needs enrolled in the school.

Conferences in regard to your child's progress can be arranged upon request. You will be referred to persons who provide special services if we feel that your child needs further evaluation of his/her school performance.

Funds are available for families needing financial assistance. MDPC asks that scholarships be reserved for families with an annual income of \$50,000 or less, unless special circumstances apply. Please contact The Little School at MDPC Director for further information. Tax records may be requested during the scholarship evaluation process.

## **AGE GROUPINGS**

Our classes are usually based on the child's age as of September 1st for the academic school year of September through May. Placement is determined by the director and is further based on parental input, teacher input, and the director's assessment of the child's developmental level. Parent requests for placement may be made but final placement will be determined by the school's director. The age groupings in the classrooms are primarily set in six month age ranges as this has been determined to be the most developmentally appropriate.

Groupings are somewhat flexible, however, and a child may be moved from one group to another to meet special needs. Children will intermingle on the playground, during special activities and for whole-school events.

## **STAFF**

The Little School at MDPC has adopted a policy of hiring which requires all full-time/part-time lead teachers and teacher assistants to fulfill the requirements of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Minimum Standards for working with young children. The staff has been carefully chosen, not only on the basis of their educational background and experience, but also for their personalities and for the warmth, love and concern they exhibit towards children. Background checks, fingerprint examinations and references are obtained on all staff members.

All staff members are knowledgeable early childhood educators, and participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research. All staff members are required to obtain at least 24 clock hours of training within the field of early childhood education (including SIDS, Shaken Baby and Child Abuse and Neglect training) annually in addition to CPR and First Aid.

The Little School at MDPC is an equal opportunity employer and demonstrates no discrimination with regards to race, color, creed or national origin.

## **PROGRAMS**

The Little School at MDPC opens at 9:15 AM and closes at 2:30 PM, Monday through Friday. A child can enroll for one to five days a week and pick any combination of days according to the space available for each session. There are two sessions each year, a 9-month Fall/Spring session, which runs from September through May, and a 7 week summer session in June and July.

We offer an early bird and extended day session each day for an additional charge. The early bird room is open from 8:30 - 9:15 AM and extended day is available from 2:30 - 3:30 PM or 2:30 - 4:00 PM.

## Substitution Days

No make-up days or daily refunds will be made if your child is absent on his/her scheduled day or if The Little School is cancelled due to circumstances outside of the control of the school or church.

### ENROLLMENT AND FEE INFORMATION

In addition to the required enrollment forms listed below, the following fees and tuition must be submitted prior to the child entering the program;

1. An annual registration fee.
2. The May tuition for the fall/spring semester.
3. If enrolled for the summer, tuition is due by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

**WE ARE UNABLE TO OFFER ANY DISCOUNTS ON THESE FEES AND, ONCE YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE PROGRAM, THESE FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.**

The Little School at MDPC is a non-profit program and tuition is based on the actual costs of operating the school divided by the number of students enrolled. Fees and tuition are set annually for the entire school year by The Little School at MDPC Parent Advisory Committee and are approved by the Session of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Detailed registration information and fee schedules are available from the school Director and/or are available on the website. The annual fees are divided into nine monthly payments, due by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Payments will be considered late after the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month and a \$30 late fee will be assessed. **Payments are the same regardless of the number of school days in each month.** Tuition and registration fees will not be pro-rated for any reason. Discounted tuition fees are offered to families that have 2 or more children in the program at a rate of 6% off of the child or children with the lowest rates. If you have a child enrolled at the Yellow School, you may take a 3% discount off of your tuition rate in both programs. Discounted fees are for monthly tuition only and do not include registration fees or activity fees. Only one of these discounts will be allowed per family. It is the family's responsibility to inform us of these discounts, we will not reimburse you for discounts not taken.

**No credit will be given in any programs for absences, emergency closures, family vacations, or partially attended months due to illness. Any changes in enrollment procedures will be communicated via the website and the enrollment packet.**

#### **Please keep in mind the following policies regarding financial arrangements:**

1. In the case of withdrawal, two weeks' written notice must be on file and is required before any tuition will be considered for a refund. **Registration fees and pre-paid May tuition are never refunded.** No credit on tuition is given for regularly scheduled school holidays and vacation periods. The preschool calendar follows as closely as possible the Spring Branch School District calendar, the same vacation, and holiday periods; the last day of spring programming is noted on the calendar.
2. A tuition fee will not be modified for absences due to short-term illness.
3. Tuition and all Little School fees will be invoiced via QuickBooks.
4. A parent who does not pick up their child by the scheduled pick-up time will be assessed an administrative late fee of \$5.00 and the parents will be charged an additional fee of \$5.00 for each additional 5 minutes. Unless the parent contacts the center and special arrangements are made, these fees will not be waived. Any children who have not been picked up by the pick-up time will be taken to THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC office to wait for their parents.

## REQUIRED ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK

**At the time of enrollment, you must have the following forms on file in our office:**

1. **ENROLLMENT INFORMATION** - identifies both parents/guardians of the child, contact phone numbers and addresses of those listed and to whom your child may be released. Please be sure you or your child's guardian is listed and anyone else who may be authorized to pick up your child. This form must be completed and signed prior to the child's admission into the program.

This form also contains permission to participate in water activities, and participation in special events. All children must have the signed permission on file in the office **PRIOR** to attending these events. If we do not have this form on file, your child may not attend even with your verbal consent. You will still be notified of any water activity day, scheduled to take place at least 48 hours in advance of the activity; these events are listed on the calendars given out by the teachers.

You will need to make changes on your child's release information anytime you make a change in pick-up for your child. **It is imperative that all pertinent information be updated as necessary to ensure the safety of your child!**

2. **HEALTH REQUIREMENT FORM** - your child's health is a matter of major importance to all of us. We provided you with a health form that must be signed by your child's physician. The physician must have examined your child within the past year. We also require that your child have certain immunizations, which we keep on file in the office. THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC must receive updated immunization records on an annual basis and/or as immunizations are administered to your child.

If your child has any type of allergy (food or seasonal), this must be noted on the health form. In addition, for those children who require medication for a reaction, an Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan must be completed and medications provided.

The medical report must be in our files prior to your child's first day of school. Effective September 2016, all children enrolled in The Little School must have all immunizations required by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Should you have any concerns or questions about this policy, please contact the Director.

3. **GETTING ACQUAINTED FORM** - the information shared by you on this form assists the teachers in understanding your child and providing the best quality of care possible.

## DAILY PROCEDURES AND ABSENCES

Each child must be accompanied by the parent to the child's assigned room. **IT IS MANDATORY FOR THE PARENT TO SIGN IN AND SIGN OUT ON A DAILY BASIS**, while the child is greeted and given a health check by the teacher. If the teacher has a concern about the health status of your child, the Director will determine the child's wellness to attend school. You should complete all the information requested each day your child attends school. It is very beneficial for the child to witness the positive communication between these two caring adults in his/her life.

Allow yourself a few extra minutes on the first day of school. If your child is experiencing separation anxiety, the teacher will advise you what is recommended for your child. You should offer assurance that you will return that afternoon and encourage your child to play with the other children. The teachers can assist you in the most effective way to leave the room. In our experience, once the child becomes involved in an activity, the anxiety of separation is lessened and the child becomes eager and willing to enter the classroom. Consider leaving your child for shorter lengths of time initially if separation seems very stressful.

The teacher is able to help and support the parent and child if events or problems are communicated. It is helpful to hand the teacher a note or communicate through a phone call about any issues which are, you feel, particularly stressful for the child. A follow-up appointment or a phone call can be helpful if you have more than just a few minutes of information to deliver. The teaching staff has made it a policy to schedule from 9:15-9:30 AM each morning to receive the children,

exchange any pertinent information about the child, and help all of the children transition into the class.

It is imperative that we have accurate emergency contact information in the event that a medical emergency arises, we are able to contact you in a timely manner. Please update all information as needed and leave emergency numbers on the daily sign-in sheet.

The staff in each classroom will post a schedule of the daily instructional program for the parents to view. Your child's environment will include age appropriate activities in:

**RELIGIOUS BASED EDUCATION  
MUSIC EXPERIENCES/MOVEMENTS  
LITERATURE AND STORYTELLING  
CREATIVE ACTIVITIES  
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - INDOOR AND OUTDOOR  
SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY  
MATH AND SCIENCE ACTIVITIES  
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT  
NUTRITION EDUCATION**

Each schedule is designed to enhance the group physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

The parent is responsible for notifying the office at 713-490-9267, if the child is to be absent, late, or on vacation as this is important for the teacher to know.

**WHAT TO BRING WITH YOUR CHILD**

**Clothing**

A complete change of play clothes (including socks) labeled with a plastic bag for soiled or wet clothes.

Diapers for younger children: at least 4 each day labeled with the child's first and last name.

**Food**

Infants - Bring what your child is eating at home. Glass baby jars are fine. Include bottles and utensils. Remember that all bottles must have lids and be labeled with the child's first and last names. Parents have the right to breastfeed and/or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

A. All Others - According to the "Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers" issued by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, a growing child needs the following amounts of food to meet just one-half of his/her daily need:

- 1) 1¼ oz. of milk or 2 ounces of cheese; and
- 2) 2 slices of bread or 1 cup of cereal; and
- 3) ¾ c. of vegetables and fruit (especially Vitamin C-rich fruits); and
- 4) 3 tablespoons of meat, fish or poultry (cooked), or 1 egg or 3/8 cup cooked dried beans or peas.

Since your child has a very busy time playing at The Little School at MDPC, please try to include most if not all of these food groups in his/her lunch. Remember that if you include perishable foods like dairy products in a lunch, you should also put one or two coolant cubes in the box to keep the foods cold. We do not have refrigerators large enough to store lunch boxes in the classrooms. We do not microwave food for the children.

**THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC IS A PEANUT/TREE NUT-FREE ENVIRONMENT. DUE TO THE INCREASED OCCURRENCES OF FOOD ALLERGIES WITH THESE FOOD PRODUCTS, ALL OF OUR CLASSROOMS HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED PEANUT/TREE NUT FREE. PLEASE DO NOT SEND FOODS OR SNACKS WITH THESE PRODUCTS.**

## **Snacks**

Snack time is scheduled mid-morning for all children. The snack time food should be considered a small "hold-over" until lunch is served. The school does not provide snacks for the children. All snacks must be packed and provided by each individual family. Water will be provided in the classrooms throughout the day.

## **Nap Mats**

Nap mats are required for all children 12 months and older and children no longer sleeping in cribs at The Little School. The mat may have a quilt or sheet cover on top as long as the cover is regularly washed so that the mat stays clean. The mat must be taken home with the child at the end of each school week. MDPC is not responsible for mats left in the classrooms.

## **DEPARTURE**

Please remember that the school day ends promptly at 2:30 PM, unless your child is signed up for Extended Day. You are welcome to pick up your child between 2-2:25 PM. You are required to write your name in full on the daily sign-in sheet indicating that your child has been picked up.

Make every effort to be punctual; it is a frightening experience for your child to feel forgotten. If there is a problem, please telephone the school Director. Your phone call will go a long way to prepare our staff and calm your child.

Any child not picked up by the scheduled time is considered late. He/she will be taken to the office. When you come to pick up your child, you will be charged a Late Fee as follows:

\$5 for the first 5 MINUTES per child

\$5 for each additional 5 MINUTES

A parent may authorize another person to pick up his/her child by either:

1. Listing the authorized person on the Enrollment Information, or
2. Bringing in a written, dated, permission slip to the child's teacher authorizing the child's release to someone else on the day of the release.

***NO CHILD WILL BE RELEASED TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON EVEN IF THE PERSON IS KNOWN TO THE CHILD. WRITTEN PERMISSION IS MANDATORY. WE WILL ASK FOR IDENTIFICATION SUCH AS A TEXAS DRIVER'S LICENSE. THIS WILL BE PHOTOCOPIED AND KEPT ON FILE. NO CHILD MAY BE PICKED UP BY ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN (18).***

Please notify the school immediately if you are going to be detained; this will not excuse you from being assessed late charges. Just leave a message on the answering machine indicating the time you will be able to pick up your child and proper paperwork (a late notice) can be filled out upon your arrival; do not forget that proper late fees will be assessed. The Little School office is very busy at drop off and pick up times and we are not always able to answer the call directly, but we will be sure to respond to the answering machine at the earliest opportunity.

**If a parent calls to authorize the emergency release of a child, we will verify that the caller is actually the parent by asking information which is relevant to your child. If there is still some doubt, we will ask to call you back and continue to ask you information pertinent to your child.**

We are legally unable to refuse visitation or the privilege of picking up a child to a parent UNLESS WE HAVE A CERTIFICATE OF CUSTODY from the legal parent or guardian with physical custody. It is the parent's responsibility to furnish a CURRENT CERTIFIED COPY OF THE COURT DIVORCE DECREE FOR YOUR CHILD'S FILE. The decree must be specific as to who has legal custody, visitation rights, and care for the child(ren) in the event of holidays, and if any specific arrangements are to be made in payment of the family monthly tuition.

## INDOOR / OUTDOOR PLAY

Playing outdoors allows children to develop self-confidence, independence and self-esteem. They also become aware of limits, boundaries and challenge in their play. When children are used to playing outdoors, they are more likely to try new activities. Children can improve their health and fitness through outdoor play and leisure activity. The freedom and space of being outdoors can encourage more expansive movement leading to good physical exercise and helping prevent obesity.

The duration of physical activity at The Little School is a total of 60 minutes split between 30 minutes of morning play and 30 minutes of extended day play. The children will get the opportunity to play in Room 120, our multi-purpose room, if weather does not permit them to play on the playground.

The children at The Little School receive structured play through table time toys. They also receive unstructured play through class centers and playground time.

We require that all children wear closed toe shoes, and clothing appropriate for the weather that day (i.e. jackets, long pants and long sleeves, short sleeves, shorts).

## ILLNESS

The Little School at MDPC will keep accurate emergency information for each child. These records include your authorization of who should be called in case of your child's illness if you cannot be reached. It is the parent's responsibility to keep these records current if addresses, telephone numbers or other relevant information changes.

### **If your child is sick or injured, The Little School at MDPC will:**

- 1. Assess the nature of the illness,**
- 2. Notify the parent(s),**
- 3. Contact the authorized alternate on the emergency list (if parents cannot be reached),**
- 4. Contact the child's physician, if noted or requested, and,**
- 5. If the child is not picked up within one (1) hour of parent notification, the staff may transport the child to Memorial City Medical Center Emergency Room. The parent will be responsible for any charges incurred.**

In such emergency cases, the parent will be notified immediately and will be asked to meet the staff member accompanying the child at the Emergency Room. If your child has been exposed to a contagious disease, please notify the center. The staff will be able to observe your child for any symptoms just as you do at home.

Close communication can also help prevent contagion to other children. We will notify you if your child has been exposed to a contagious disease or illness which may have an effect on your family. Our staff is trained to observe symptoms as well as to use illness prevention techniques. We will make every effort to protect the health of all of our children. State licensing requires that The Little School at MDPC at MDPC use the Communicable Disease Chart as a guide to determine length of illness, readmission criteria, and treatment which is necessary in order to reduce the chance of contamination to the children.

It is of vital concern to the State of Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services that your child's medical records be kept up-to-date. **When your infant through preschooler receives booster shots or has a change in medical information, this must be communicated to the school through an updated "shot record".** Any child who has medical records which are out of

date can be excluded from attending classes by the State of Texas, licensing division--this will be enforced by the school as well.

If your child has an allergic reaction to a food or other source, the Director will follow the instructions as given on the Emergency Plan provided by the parent. These are posted in the office and classroom. You will be contacted immediately following a reaction. Please advise the office of any changes in the status of your child's allergies.

A sick child belongs at home where he/she is more comfortable. Please notify the school at (713)490-9267 or e-mail the Director at [aplaisance@mdpc.org](mailto:aplaisance@mdpc.org) if your child is going to be absent or detained. **We DO NOT dispense medicine of any kind for any reason.** Please do not put medicine in the children's bags as a matter of safety.

## COVID Protocols

It is the responsibility of all of us to work together to keep each other healthy this school year. Thank you for partnering with the teachers to help us maintain a safe and healthy environment at Little School. Please read the important procedures below:

### Procedures:

- We will continue to maintain our high standard of cleaning to prevent the spread of illness.
- Children will wash hands upon entering the classroom.
- If your child becomes ill during the day, we ask that you pick them up within 20-30 minutes of speaking with the office.
- If your child is sent home ill, they must be symptom and fever free for 24 hours before returning to school (without the use of medication to lower the fever).
- Please keep your child home if they show any symptoms of the common cold-coughing, sneezing, fever of 100.4 or higher, runny nose, etc.
- If your child test positive for Covid-19, we require a 5-day quarantine from the first day or symptoms or the day of a positive test. They also must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours before returning without the use of medication.
- If your child has a known exposure to someone with Covid-19 (i.e. someone in household has contracted Covid), we ask that they quarantine for 5 days and produce a negative test or receive clearance from a healthcare provider.
- If there is a possible secondary or indirect exposure (i.e. someone else in household has been exposed to Covid), we ask that you closely monitor your child for symptoms for 7 days.
- All Covid Cases must be reported to the office. We will communicate to the class if there is an exposure that impacts your child.
- Closure of classrooms may occur depending on the risk of exposure.
- While we will exercise as much caution as possible, parents acknowledge that by sending their children to Little School there is still a risk that they may contract Covid-19 or other illnesses.

Please review the **illness guidelines** shown below so that we may provide a healthy environment for all of our LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC children:

**The child must be kept at home under the following circumstances:**

**1. Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher:**

**Children with fever must be excluded from school until they have been fever free for 24 hours with no medication, or we have clearance signed by a physician indicating it is not a communicable disease.**

**2. Diarrhea:**

**Children with two or more diarrhea episodes in a twenty-four hour period will be excluded from school until the child has been free from diarrhea for a 24-hour period, or we have clearance signed by a physician indicating it is not a communicable disease.**

**3. Other symptoms which indicate that a child belongs at home are:**

- \*vomiting within the previous 24-hour period**
- \*a heavy, non-clear nasal discharge**
- \*a constant cough or sore throat**
- \*fussy, cranky and generally not himself/herself**
- \*a skin rash**
- \*symptoms of a possible communicable disease**

**Following an illness, a child may return when:**

- \* 24 hours have elapsed since the last diarrhea stool, vomiting or fever (without medication)**
- \* in infants and toddlers, it is determined the symptoms are related to teething and the child is not running a fever.**
- \* it is determined by your doctor the nasal discharge is due to allergies and no infection is present.**
- \* he/she has been exposed to a communicable disease, but the school has been notified so the incubation period can be discussed, and it can be determined on what days he/she should stay at home.**
- \* a physician clears the child if the infection was contagious or thought to be contagious when discharged from school. The pediatrician must furnish written clearance for the child to return to school.**

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

In case of severe weather (i.e. hurricane, tornado, high water, high winds, etc.), please listen to radio and/or television reports. We will automatically cancel school if SBISD cancels or if the television or radio declares roads impassable. If an emergency situation exists at The Little School at MDPC (for example, no heat, electricity, etc.), each teacher will then contact her parents.

Each family may refer to the school calendar for school closings so you can prepare to schedule time off from work to be with your child, or to schedule someone in your home should you not be able to make arrangements to take time off from work.

## **COMMUNICATION AND CALENDAR**

Your communication with the staff at The Little School at MDPC is vital to the success of your child in our program. The following forms of communication have been set up as a system to keep you informed of school events and calendar events:

- **DAILY SUNSHINE REPORTS** - the staff fills in the information on these sheets and places it in your child's diaper bag before they go home.
- **MONTHLY CALENDARS** will keep you informed of the curriculum in the classroom.

- MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS will keep you informed of the events in the school and parenting tips.
- BULLETIN BOARDS outside of the office will contain the most current notifications
- PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES – progress reports will be completed annually with conferences scheduled as needed.
- FLYERS AND E-MAILS will be sent to parents with important event information and/or reminders. Any e-mails to THE LITTLE SCHOOL AT MDPC should be directed to Ashley Plaisance at [aplaisance@mdpc.org](mailto:aplaisance@mdpc.org)

REMEMBER: Your child's emotional well-being is important to us. If there is a problem or special concern, we will be happy to work with you. Please let us know about unusual stresses or concerns in your child's life.

Occasionally difficulties or differences might occur. The following will briefly outline the procedure for grievances. First, every effort to listen to the parties (parent and teacher) involved would be made. Second, discussion of viewpoints to reach a workable solution. Third, unresolved conflicts should then be discussed with the director. If this is not satisfactory, communication with the Director of Children's Ministries would be suggested. Every effort will be made to come to a satisfactory solution within our program philosophy, licensing, and accreditation standards.

Other forms of communication in the school are phone calls to the school requesting that the teacher call you on her break, a note to the teacher at drop off or pick up, and by calling the school and requesting a call at a specific time.

The school calendar is communicated to all parents through the newsletter. The annual calendar which contains school openings, closings, all-school events, and holidays has been provided for you. The school does not follow the SBISD calendar directly but does try to observe the holiday closings scheduled by SBISD. The Little School at MDPC will not have the same in-service days as SBISD as it does not correlate to the seminars and workshops offered to private schools such as ours.

## CHILDREN'S TOTE BAGS AND CUBBIES

You should check your child's school tote bag **daily** when picking up at the school or when your child arrives at home. Your child's tote is used as the staff's primary communication system for monthly newsletters, parent evenings, conferences, etc. Your child should also have a change of clothing in his/her tote in the event of an accident.

## PARKING LOT SAFETY

All children must be walked into the building by a parent/guardian. Do not leave your engine running or leave children in parked cars. Please bring your purse in with you when you enter the building.

No parking is allowed in the fire lanes and we ask that parents please do not park in spaces designated as handicapped parking areas. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS / CLOTHING

All children should wear loose, comfortable clothing appropriate for active, involved experiences. Examples are shorts, pants and tops, and short dresses that do not create a tripping hazard. Each child will be indoors/outdoors and in or near potentially messy activities such as paint, and markers that may not wash out. **PLEASE AVOID ANY ARTICLE OF CLOTHING THAT IS NOT WASHABLE.** Play is our work and children must be dressed appropriately. During toilet training, children should wear clothing that is easily removable by the child. It makes it easier for them if they can remove and put on their own clothes during this period. Belts, overalls and all-in-one clothes should be avoided.

All clothing must be labeled with the child's name in clear print. A laundry marking pen or labels available at fabric shops are recommended. The school will not be responsible for items which may be lost or stolen.

Each child should have a change of clothing in his/her tote bag including socks and underwear. Please do not admonish your child to "stay clean", as this will put too much restriction on his/her choice of activities. We will try not to use anything that won't come off in the washing machine or bathtub in at least three washings; however, some of the primary paint colors have been known to stain clothing. Therefore, older clothing is the best choice. Smocks are worn in the classroom while children are painting or participating in messy activities but sometimes creativity takes a turn and is messy, resulting in stained clothing.

***Tennis shoes are recommended at all times for safety reasons. No boots please, except on Rodeo Day. Also, please do not send your child in crocs as many children cannot play freely on the playground in this style of shoe due to the rubberized fall surface.***

Occasionally your child may return home in borrowed clothing from our school and with his/her own soiled items in a plastic bag. Please launder and return the borrowed clothing for another child to use. Lost and found articles can be claimed in the administration office.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our children live in a society that requires self-discipline, consideration of others, respect for property, as well as respect for themselves. Teachers support children's emotional development, assisting children to be comfortable, relaxed, happy, and involved in play and other activities. The staff help children deal with anger, sadness, and frustration by comforting, identifying, and reflecting feelings, and helping children use various strategies to express emotions and solve social problems. Children are encouraged to verbalize feelings and ideas.

By setting clear, consistent, and reasonable limits on your child's behavior, we give him/her the security of knowing exactly what is expected--life becomes predictable. Within these limits, the child will be encouraged to make choices and successful decisions. The staff uses children's mistakes as learning opportunities, describing the situation and encouraging children's evaluation of the problem rather than imposing the solution. A child's growing self-esteem flourishes as he/she experiences success with a variety of tasks and is safe to learn from natural mistakes. We do not expect perfection from any adult or child.

As the children grow in an age-appropriate environment, the teachers will set reasonable limits and/or will stop and re-direct unacceptable behavior without humiliation or physical punishment. More importantly, the teachers will model, reinforce and nurture the positive actions we all value. Often it is possible for an experienced teacher to re-direct or anticipate a child's behavior before a negative action occurs thus resulting in prevention.

Often parents ask us if we use "time out" as a form of discipline. If you mean that a child is told to sit in a chair or specific area alone to "think about" what he/she has done, the answer is "no, we do not". A young child does not "think" about wrong actions, and it is our responsibility to teach the child the words he/she should or could use or the actions he/she could or should take when frustrated. In other words, we intervene in a situation to allow the child to vent his/her feelings safely and to regain control, while giving the child the words to use to solve his/her problems. Usually the child stays with the group and solves the problem, letting other children hear and see the solution. If at all possible, the staff will "re-create" the frustrating play situation and stay with the child to offer assistance and words in a positive way thus allowing for success and practice. Just as adults need practice to perfect a new sport or trade, children require this same need.

Occasionally, a child will lose control of his/her physical actions, voice, and language to the extent that he/she must be removed from the group for the child to regain control and to safeguard the secure feeling of the other children. Removal is not a punishment. As soon as the child is quiet, the teacher will plan with him/her what the child will do when he/she returns to the group.

This version of time out is a solution to a problem because it teaches the child what to do. Our responsibility is to model the words and actions a child can use all of his/her life to solve problems.

Our goal is a secure, happy child, confident of his/her own ability and able to live and communicate with the people around him. We will frequently arrange conferences with parents to communicate our methods and to discuss how we can work consistently together for the child's optimal growth.

A telephone call from the center should not be considered a bad report or an emergency. Our role is to support your family by conferencing with parents for a variety of reasons. Often we need to communicate a situation and the resulting actions the staff took to work with your child, making it a successful situation. Sometimes we need to inform the parents about feelings the child has expressed; often we need to ask questions about a child's behavior at home in order to be realistic about his/her behavior at the center. All information is confidential and is used to help us nurture and teach your child.

## **BEHAVIORAL CONCERNS**

During the course of a child's enrollment in the center, he/she may exhibit some behavioral concerns, which can manifest themselves in the form of spitting, head banging, biting, hitting and temper tantrums. While most of the behavioral actions do not inflict harm or reduce the safety of the children, some of these behaviors can cause concern, harm or frighten the other children in the classroom. For example, occasional and infrequent biting can be displayed by pre-verbal children who will bite instead of communicate when confronted with a friend who chooses not to share a toy. Other behaviors, such as temper tantrums, can often result when limitations are enforced in the classroom.

At the point when the behavior problems become frequent, severe, result in injury to the child or his/her classmates, reflect a change in the child's self esteem, or form a pattern, the school will then contact the parents for a conference. Parents must realize that when a classroom environment becomes unsafe or unpredictable for all of the children, the school must intervene and take the necessary steps to bring about safety. The parents and the school will consult to look for possible changes, which may have triggered this behavior and work as a team to search for possible solutions, if time permits.

Following the conference, the staff and parents will work together as a team to bring about the desired change in behavior. Should the efforts of both of these parties be unable to change the behavior during the allotted time, the school's administration will conference again with the child's parents and at that time will offer the following recommendations:

1. The parents may wish to seek outside intervention with a professional who may offer additional recommendations to both the center and the family (the school will offer names of those professionals who work with young children);
2. The parents may wish to reduce the amount of hours/days the child is in our school to receive outside intervention and target the behavior;
3. The parents may wish to withdraw their child on a temporary basis until the inappropriate behavior is under control (the child's place in the school would be kept open for a specified time);
4. The parents may wish to permanently withdraw their child from the facility and place their child in another setting more applicable to his/her needs.

**This school reserves the right to and will request that a family withdraw their child if it is determined the parent cannot abide by our policies, or if we cannot adequately meet the needs of the child/family due to classroom size, teacher experience, budgetary limitations, or the inability to preserve the safety of the other children.**

## **CHAPEL**

Chapel is held approximately twice a week in the multipurpose Room 120 for our older 2's turning 3 children. Faith development and Chapel are an important part of our regular preschool curriculum. During chapel we explore ways we know God; we interpret Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and birthdays from a Christian perspective, and sing songs about Jesus and other Biblical teachings.

Because we believe each person is a child of God and worthy of love, acceptance, and support, we provide many experiences to build a good self-image in children. Our teachers reflect a firm faith and have learned to share that faith with our young preschool children in our daily curriculum and teachings.

## **PARENT RESOURCES**

The administration has information on community happenings for children, parenting workshops, etc. These parent education sessions will discuss topics of interest to parents and will be communicated through our monthly newsletter, flyers and e-mails. Your attendance at these educational events is showing support for the continuance of these workshops. The Minimum Standards of The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services is located in the school office but is also available online at [dfps.state.tx.us](http://dfps.state.tx.us). Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to stop in the school office.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

In compliance with licensing and accreditation standards, no volunteers will have access to the children's programs without school screening and orientation sessions with the administrative staff. Volunteers will work with the children only under the supervision of another staff member. The orientation sessions will train the parents in handling small groups of children, the licensing laws by which the school operates, discipline of children, release of children, and basic safety and first aid procedures.

As a licensed early childhood facility, we recognize that parent participation is vital to the growth and the development of the children. Children learn to trust in many different ways; many times seeing a parent active on the campus is one way in which the child can learn trust. This is your school. We need and urge your voluntary assistance in board planning, programs, sharing, hobbies, fundraising, recruiting future students, and making educational games. We always need extra parents to assist us in making our school the best.

## **SAFE SLEEP**

All Staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at TLS will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

Parents of infants will be provided with an Operational Policy on Infant Safe Sleep to review and sign.

- Infants will always be put to sleep on their backs.
- Infants will be placed on a firm mattress, with a tight fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full size cribs.
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not

be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing.

- Sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners will not be used. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation.
- Sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- If an infant needs extra warmth, sleep clothing such as sleepers or footed pajamas that are provided by the parents will be used as an alternative to blankets.
- Only one infant will be placed in a crib to sleep.
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must *not be attached* to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk.
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), the infant will be moved to a crib immediately.
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations.
- Sleeping infants will be actively observed by sight and sound.
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, the infant will be placed on the infant's back for sleep and allowed to assume a preferred sleep position.
- Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- Infants will not be swaddled for sleep or rest.

Parents of infants will be provided with an Operational Policy on Infant Safe Sleep to review and sign.

## **A D D I T I O N A L   I N F O R M A T I O N**

- House Bill 2086 states that licensed childcare programs are to notify parents about the new gang-free zone designation. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang-related activity is prohibited and is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. Specific locations where certain gang related criminal activity is now prohibited include, but is not limited to, public schools, playgrounds, video arcade facilities, and day care centers. Certain gang-related activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of our program is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty.
- Certification is performed annually that all bulletins and notices issued by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission regarding unsafe children's products have been reviewed. I also certify that there are no unsafe children's products in the center of home except for the following: A product that is an antique or collectible children's product and is not used by, or accessible to any child, an unsafe children's product that is being retrofitted to make it safe and the product is not used by, or accessible to any child.
- If needed, areas within the church are available for breastfeeding. Ask a staff member for the location of these areas.
- An Emergency Preparedness Plan is available in The Little School office and maybe reviewed at any time during regular office hours 8:30 am – 4 pm, Monday-Friday, or after hours by

appointment only. This plan includes written procedures for evacuation during an emergency.

- Parents are always welcome to visit The Little School at MDPC during our hours of operation without prior approval. Due to the security doors, you will need to come to the school office first so that we may grant access through the doors.
- Firearms are prohibited (concealed or open carry) within our program unless the individual is a law enforcement official who is trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty.
- Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect of Children  
All employees are required to have annual training in preventing and responses to abuse and neglect of children which shall include:
  - warning signs of possible abuse and/or neglect
  - how to report a suspected incidence of abuse and/or neglect
  - awareness of prevention techniques for parents and employees
  - actions that a parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should take to obtain assistance and intervention
  - information for parents about appropriate community organizations, therapists, etc.
- Effective June 2014, The Little School has adopted a policy regarding vaccine preventable diseases. This policy recommends that employees have a flu shot annually as well as a booster for Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis every 10 years. It is also recommended that adults over the age of 60 have a Shingles and pneumococcal vaccine. This policy has been developed as a response to the increase of certain diseases world-wide and is intended to keep our teachers healthy.