

1. NEW SCHOOL PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

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Welcome

Dear New School Family,

New School is a rich and diverse environment. We have a caring, involved staff, a large outdoor space, compelling activities, and a commitment to empowering children. The program is structured to allow a maximum amount of freedom for each child within the limits of responsibility. For kids and families to reap the benefits of our program, we need everyone's cooperation. Please read this handbook to understand how the school works and what your responsibilities are. At the end of the book you'll find the New School Top Five – the five things we need everyone to commit to in order to make the school run smoothly.

Before School Starts

- necessary forms and documents

Before your child enters the program, please be sure to fill out and return the following forms. They are required by licensing. **ALL FORMS MUST BE RETURNED BEFORE YOUR CHILD STARTS!**

- admission agreement
- parent or guardian contact information
- physician's form
- immunization record
- health history
- field trip permission/medical release
- parents' rights
- personal rights

We also need to receive your activities/materials fee and cleanup deposit, and we ask each family to participate in our e-scrip program which raises money for the Scholarship Fund.

It's the parent's/guardian's responsibility to keep all forms on file up-to-date. Be sure to inform us of any changes.

Participating parents will also need to provide results from a physical and take a TB test.

New School Basics

- daily schedule
- first day of school
- sign in sheet
- clothes

- lunch
- snack
- bulletin boards & pockets
- activities
- field trips & Totland
- sunscreen
- diapers & toilet training
- naps
- socialization and settling disputes

Daily Schedule

New School is open Monday through Friday from 7:15 a.m. to 6 p.m. The preschool program is from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with day care before and after.

We serve snacks at 10:30, 3:30, and 5. Lunch is at 12:20. Nappers sleep or rest from 1 to 3 PM.

Please see the Annual Calendar for information on school holidays and closures. Please note that the school is closed the last week in August.

First Day of School

Feel free to spend time with your child at New School on the first day to help him or her make the transition to a new environment. We have an open door policy and welcome parents to be with us throughout the day: have lunch, stay for a snack, or just come in and read a book to a few children. When you're ready to say goodbye to your child, try to be reassuring and keep the goodbye short and sweet. Always say goodbye rather than sneak out. We've found that things go more smoothly when you develop a regular routine for saying goodbye. Talk to your child's teacher if goodbyes are overly difficult.

Make sure to familiarize yourself with the New School set up. Locate your child's cubby, your parent pocket, the sign-in sheet, snack contribution sheet, director's office and director and staff pockets.

Sign-in Sheet

Always remember to sign your child in and out. Licensing requires that you use your signature, not initials or first name only. Please write legibly! In addition, we welcome notes about your child. Use the sign-in sheet to tell us if your child has a playdate after school and will be leaving with another family, if someone else will be picking your child up, if your child needs New School lunch, and so on.

Clothes

Since we are outdoors often, please send appropriate outdoor wear for your child according to weather and season: a bathing suit for warm days, boots and raincoat in the rainy season.

Please send children to school in "messable" play clothes and keep special or delicate clothes at home. We have an assortment of dress-ups for creative play and don't want children to wear commercial costumes to school.

Please label all your child's clothing and personal items. Keep an extra change of clothing in your child's cubby. We recommend putting this in a box or backpack clearly marked with your child's name.

Lunch

Children bring their own lunches to New School. Please label your child's lunch box and don't pack any foods with sugar or include glass containers.

We do make a lunch for children who are extra hungry or whose parents have forgotten or were unable to bring lunch. Please note this on the sign-in sheet if you are requesting New

School lunch for your child. We serve apple juice mixed with filtered water for a beverage at lunch.

See our Food Policy below for more information.

Snack

Parents contribute to snack once a week. Parent contributions should be brought in by Wednesday and conform to our Food Policy (no sugar, no meat products, nothing with chemical additives). Please decide on a snack you can bring weekly and then check off your contribution each week on the sheet posted in the main hallway (across from the sign in sheet).

Bulletin Boards & Pockets

Please check bulletin boards daily for notices. Your newsletter as well as other school notices will be put in your parent pocket, which is in the main hallway.

Staff and the director also have pockets, located near the director's office. There is a pocket in the piano room (to the right of the kitchen area) where parents may leave tuition checks and other school communications.

Activities

New School offers a variety of activities and learning opportunities, including cooking, carpentry, working with crafts of every variety, games, dress up, stories, and more. We always have at least one teacher who speaks Spanish. Learning about nature and the environment has always been a part of New School. The children tend a garden and care for rabbits. They also have the opportunity to observe the life and development of many other creatures such as butterflies, frogs, insects, and so on.

We are structured to allow a maximum amount of freedom for the children. They may choose among activities, or choose to create their own through play. The children may move between the outside space and inside at will. The one restriction is that children may not be in any area when there is no teacher present.

Field Trips & Totland

Field trips are an integral part of New School. Tuesday is field trip day for the three-year-old class. Thursday is field trip day for the four-year-olds. On Friday, the fours go to kindergym. On field trip days, please send your child to school wearing appropriate clothing and shoes and have them at school by 9 a.m.

Special field trips are often announced on the main bulletin board near the sign-in sheet along with any requirements. We have a van and drivers with special licenses to drive it. Sometimes parent volunteers drive. To do so, they must have insurance and proper seating arrangements.

On Wednesday afternoons in good weather the children go to Totland, a park at Virginia and McGee. We eat lunch and spend the early afternoon there, returning between 3 and 3:30. Nappers stay at school. Children who are picked up from Totland must be checked in and out with a teacher.

Sunscreen

On sunny days, please sunscreen your child before bringing him or her to school. We have sunscreen here as well and will reapply it on especially sunny days. If you have a special sunscreen for your child, please give it to the teachers for them to store at school.

Diapers & Toilet Training

If your child is still in diapers, you must bring a supply of diapers to school. Teachers will let you know when you need to bring more. There is no diapering fee for children in the two-year-old program, but there is a small monthly fee for preschoolers in diapers.

Naps

Children who still take a nap may nap in the afternoon at New School. Nappers should bring a sheet, small pillow with a pillowcase, and a small blanket, all clearly labeled and placed in a cloth bag or pillowcase for storage. We have cots for nappers. Nap linen must be picked up by the parent at the end of each week for laundering and returned to school on Monday. Please tell the director if your child takes a nap.

Socialization and Settling Disputes

One of the most important tasks for preschool children is forming peer relationships. Through careful intervention between children and conflict situations we facilitate the socialization process so that children learn the importance of sharing, compassion, and honesty, and learn to recognize their feelings and verbalize them. Our staff is creative in finding solutions to problems. Please talk to your child's teacher if you have questions regarding socialization or discipline.

Parent Involvement & Responsibilities

- parent participants
- being involved if you can't be a participant
- fundraising
- clean-ups
- parent meetings
- communication

Parent Participants

Parents who have the time have the option to participate at the school once a week and to receive a break in tuition. There is an orientation meeting for parent participants in September. If you cannot work on your assigned day, you must fill your space by trading with another parent or by paying a missed participation fee that helps pay for a substitute. Please arrive by 8:45 a.m. on your participation day. Parent participants are required to take a physical and a TB test.

Being Involved If You Can't Be a Participant

There are many ways for parents to be involved and help in their children's care and learning at school outside of classroom participation. You could help drive and/or supervise for kindergym or other field trips, take a small group of children on a short walking trip, spend 15 to 20 minutes reading to a small group of children, help with clean-up at the end of the day, collect items for dress-up clothes, make capes or costumes, make new pieces for wooden puzzles, save items such as woodscraps, wrapping paper, containers, beads, yarn and fabric scraps, etc.

Fundraising

New School holds two major fundraising events each school year, one in the fall and the other in the spring. Parents are responsible for participating. These events are our main source of income for scholarships and special purchases.

Clean-ups

General school clean-ups are held monthly. Each preschool family must participate in at least two clean-ups a year. Sign-up sheets will be posted. Other housekeeping chores (mending, repairing, etc.) always need to be done and can be performed in place of a clean-up. Clean-ups can be bought out at \$100 each.

Parent Meetings

We hold two scheduled parent meetings during the school year, one in the fall and one in spring. These are evening meetings and child-care is provided for a small fee. Other parent meetings may be scheduled from time to time as needed or desired. Parent-teacher conferences are also available and may be initiated as needed by either parents or school.

Communication

New School is a community of families caring for their children. Parents and staff need communication and feedback on the children they care for. This is especially true if there is a change in the family, or sickness, or a traumatic event. We also want to know about any falls or scrapes that occur out of school. Please discuss any concerns about your child or child development questions with the teachers. For an extended discussion, please make an appointment with a teacher or see the director.

There is an email list of parents and an online newsgroup you may sign up for to receive news and information electronically.

Policies

- food
- tuition & fees
- sick children
- medication
- late pick-up

Food

We have a definite and strict food policy. We serve whole grains and food with no sugar, no preservatives, no artificial colorings or flavorings, and no trans-fats. We do not serve meat so that vegetarian children can partake freely. We ask that, when sending snack or lunch, parents follow our guidelines and send only wholesome food.

There is a snack at 10:30 and 3:30. Parents contribute to the morning snack by bringing in fruit, veggies, cheese, raisins, nuts, etc. once a week. The afternoon snack is provided by the school and is a hearty one.

Tuition & Fees

New School is a non-profit organization that operates primarily on tuition fees. Tuition is calculated on a yearly basis and divided into 12 installments paid by the month and due in advance. Fees are due on the first of each month. We will not bill you – it is your responsibility to pay on time.

There is an annual materials and activities fee of \$100 and a \$200 deposit for each preschool child (the equivalent of two cleanups) and a \$100 deposit for each school-age child (the equivalent of one cleanup). When you do your cleanup the deposit is credited toward your next month's tuition.

We charge a \$10 handling fee for any returned checks.

There are no refunds or exceptions for absences, including vacations. We require 30 days notice (or one month's payment) for withdrawal.

We reserve the right to raise fees with 30 days advance notice.

Sick Children

Children who get sick at school are isolated with a teacher and their parents are called. Children may not come to school if they have a fever, a rash that has not been checked by a doctor, or nits in their hair. You must tell school staff if your child has been sick. If a child has a stomach upset that includes vomiting and/or diarrhea, or has had a fever, we require that

the child stay home for 24 hours. At their discretion, the morning teachers may not allow a child into school if he/she is not well.

We will give a child medicine that has been prescribed by a doctor. Please see our Medication Policy below.

Medication

We will give children a daily dose of medicine prescribed by the doctor. We do not give over-the-counter medicines. All medicine must be delivered directly to the teacher by the parent along with written instructions. Never put medicine in a child's backpack.

Late Pick-up

Pick-up time is 6 p.m. at the latest. If you cannot make it by 6 p.m., you must call. This is important to staff and to your child. If you do pick up after 6 p.m. you must pay the teacher who waits with your child \$5 for every 15 minutes (or part thereof) after 6 p.m.

Special Events

- potlucks
- holiday program
- Mendocino camping trip
- Fall & Spring fundraising events
- Halloween

New School holds a number of special events throughout the year where parents and families can come together and socialize. We have two parent potlucks – one in spring and one in fall. We have a holiday party in December with a potluck dinner and performances by the school-age children and the preschoolers. Our Fall and Spring fundraisers have live entertainment (often provided by our talented parents and staff) and fun activities such as games, face-painting, etc. And every year there is a family outing over Memorial Day weekend to Mendocino Woodlands Campgrounds. This is a lovely old campground with redwood cabins and stone fireplaces, just perfect for a family trip. Sign up for the camping trip is posted the month before in the piano room.

For Halloween, children may come to school with a costume in a bag. After lunch they can put on the costume and we take them to the Halloween parade and performance at Berkley Arts Magnet School (Milvia and Lincoln). School staff will help your child change into costume before the parade.

Emergency Procedures

Each teacher or participating parent will escort the children in his/her room or area out the appropriate exit – the nearest, most accessible, unblocked exit – and into the north yard, or to the south yard and then into the north yard via the sidewalk or back connecting gate. All possible hiding places in the room or yard will be checked and the children will be brought as a group to the north yard. Once in the north yard, the children should sit down so roll call can be taken using the daily sign in sheet.

- If it is necessary to evacuate the premises, Berkeley Arts Magnet School (Milvia and Lincoln) will be our temporary relocation site.
- Each staff person has a designated responsibility in the case of a disaster, i.e., direct evaluation, person count, first aid, etc.
- Each staff person has been certified in CPR and first aid.
- Emergency supplies, first aid kits and emergency phone numbers are stored outside (in the peace circle storage compartment) in case the building is inaccessible.
- Emergency care and disaster plans are posted in each classroom.

New School Top Five

Can't remember everything in this handbook? Here are the Top Five things you can do to make your child's experience at New School a smooth one:

1. Always sign your child in and out. This is required by licensing. We use the sign in sheet in case of emergency so it is critical that the sheet be accurate and your signature clearly legible. Use the comments area for special pick-up arrangements, to request a New School lunch, to give directions about medication, and so on. Teachers use the comments area to make special notes about your child's day.
2. Label all personal items and help your child practice good cubby habits. All clothing, shoes, spare clothes, towels, etc. need to be labeled with your child's name. Anything that is a personal item should be kept in your child's cubby. Check lost and found weekly.
3. Don't bring toys or special items from home. Books and CDs are fine as long as they are labeled with your child's name. Give them to a teacher to ensure their safe return. Check with staff if you have any questions about an item.
4. Bring in your snack contributions by Wednesday and check it off on the snack chart. Snacks need to follow our Food Policy.
5. Help keep your child and the New School community healthy by washing hands and teaching good health habits. And follow our Medication Policy if you need to send medication to school with your child.