



Sick Policy 2026-2027

The health and wellbeing of our children, families, and teachers are of primary concern at Little Paws. Because preschool children learn and play in close proximity, illness can spread through the classroom very quickly. Keeping one sick child home may prevent an illness from reaching many other children, families, and members of our staff.

Managing infectious illness successfully requires vigilance and cooperation from our entire community. We ask every family to read, respect, and follow the guidelines below.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Sick children may not attend school. Please keep your child home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- A new or unexplained rash
- A wet or persistent cough
- Persistent sneezing or a runny nose
- Thick, opaque, yellow, or green nasal discharge
- A sore throat
- Red eyes with discharge or crusting
- Wheezing or difficulty breathing
- A significant decrease in appetite

- An earache
- A headache or muscle aches
- Unusual fatigue, irritability, or discomfort
- Chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease, impetigo, pinworms, or head lice
- Any other symptoms that prevent the child from participating comfortably in the school day

Children must generally remain home until they have been free of symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or symptom-masking medication. Some illnesses have longer or more specific exclusion periods, as described below.

If your child was sick during the previous afternoon, evening, or overnight, they should not be sent to school the following morning. A child returning after an illness must be eating and drinking reasonably well, behaving substantially like themselves, and able to participate fully in classroom activities, outdoor play, meals, and rest time.

Being fever-free does not, by itself, mean that a child is ready to return. Please consider the whole child.

Specific Illness and Symptom Guidelines

1. Colds and Nasal Symptoms

Please keep your child home during the active stage of a cold, particularly when they have persistent sneezing, frequent or heavy nasal discharge, congestion, fatigue, irritability, or a need for constant nose wiping.

Children who do not feel well need rest. A child who requires continual one-on-one care for nose wiping, handwashing, or cleaning contaminated materials cannot comfortably participate in the classroom and may require a teacher's attention to the point that the classroom falls out of ratio. Active respiratory symptoms can also spread extremely quickly through shared spaces and materials.

A very mild, occasional, **clear** runny nose may be manageable if the child has no other symptoms, feels completely well, and can participate independently. Please contact Miss Vanessa before drop-off if you are uncertain.

2. Coughs

A child with a wet, frequent, disruptive, or worsening cough should remain home. A child who coughs frequently while sleeping at night is also likely to cough during nap time, which can be uncomfortable for the child and disruptive to other resting children.

A mild, occasional dry cough left over from a previous illness may be acceptable if it is clearly improving and the child has no fever, runny nose, fatigue, breathing difficulty, or other symptoms.

Children should be reminded to cough into their elbows and wash their hands afterward. Cough medicine may not be used simply to suppress an active illness so that a child can attend school.

3. Fever

A fever is a temperature of 100.4°F or higher. Children must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or any other fever-reducing medication before returning.

If a child is sent home with a fever, they must remain home the following school day. Even without a temperature of 100.4°F, a child who appears pale, achy, chilled, unusually tired, or visibly unwell should remain home.

If your child develops a fever as part of a respiratory illness, Little Paws may ask you to administer a COVID-19 test before they return.

4. Sore Throats and Ear Pain

If your child wakes with a sore throat, offer them something to drink and see whether it improves. If the pain persists, they should remain home and may need to be evaluated for strep throat or another infection.

A child diagnosed with strep throat may return after at least 24 hours of appropriate antibiotic treatment, provided they have also been fever-free for 24 hours without medication and feel well enough to participate.

Ear infections themselves are not generally contagious, and not every ear infection requires antibiotics. However, a child with significant ear pain, fever, poor sleep, unusual irritability, or other active symptoms should remain home. They may return when they are fever-free, comfortable, and able to participate normally. If antibiotics are prescribed, families must follow the healthcare provider's instructions.

5. Vomiting and Diarrhea

A child who vomits must remain home. If vomiting occurs during the afternoon, evening, or overnight, the child should not attend school the following day.

Children may return when they have gone at least 24 hours without vomiting, can comfortably hold down food and liquids, and have regained their usual energy.

A child with diarrhea must remain home. They may return after at least 24 hours without diarrhea and once bowel movements, eating, and drinking have returned close to their normal pattern.

Bloody stool, persistent diarrhea, signs of dehydration, or severe stomach pain should be evaluated by a healthcare provider.

6. Pinkeye

Redness alone may have several causes, including allergies or irritation. However, a child with eye redness accompanied by yellow or green discharge, crusted or matted eyelashes, swelling, pain, or repeated eye rubbing must remain home and be evaluated.

Viral and bacterial conjunctivitis can both be contagious, and antibiotics do not treat viral conjunctivitis. If bacterial conjunctivitis is diagnosed and antibiotic drops are prescribed, the child may return after at least 24 hours of treatment, provided the discharge and crusting have substantially resolved and the child is otherwise well.

Please contact Miss Vanessa before returning. We may request confirmation from the child's healthcare provider when the cause is unclear or symptoms remain visible.

7. Rashes and Contagious Skin Conditions

Children with a new or unexplained rash must remain home until the cause is known and it has been determined that the rash is not contagious. Please notify Miss Vanessa.

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

Being fever-free alone does not mean a child is ready to return after hand, foot and mouth disease.

Children must remain home while:

- New spots or blisters are appearing
- Sores are open, wet, or weeping
- Mouth sores are causing pain or excessive drooling
- They are eating or drinking poorly
- They are unusually tired, irritable, uncomfortable, or not acting like themselves
- They cannot participate fully in classroom activities, meals, outdoor play, and rest time

Children may return when they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication, no new spots or blisters have appeared for at least 24 hours, all existing blisters are dry and healing, and their usual appetite, comfort, energy, and ability to participate have returned.

Dry, healing marks or scabs may remain after the active illness has passed. However, a child who is still visibly uncomfortable, unusually tired, or unable to participate fully should remain home until they have recovered.

Chickenpox

All children attending Little Paws are required to be vaccinated against chickenpox. Breakthrough cases can still occur and may appear as red spots that do not blister or form scabs.

Children with chickenpox must remain home until no new spots have appeared for at least 24 hours, any fluid-filled or open lesions are completely dry and crusted, they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication, and their usual energy and ability to participate have returned.

Impetigo

Impetigo is a highly contagious bacterial skin infection caused by staph or strep entering through tiny openings in the skin, like scratches, mosquito bites, or rashes. Children with suspected impetigo must remain home, be evaluated by a healthcare provider, and begin appropriate antibiotic treatment.

They may return after completing at least 24 hours of treatment, provided they are otherwise feeling well and the sores are dry, healing, and securely covered with clean clothing or bandages. If any sores are still open, wet, spreading, or draining, or are

located somewhere they cannot remain securely covered, the child must remain home until they have dried and begun to heal.

Please notify Miss Vanessa before returning.

8. Head Lice, Nits, and Pinworms

Lice are live parasites, while nits are their eggs. If live lice are discovered at school, the family will be notified and the child will need to begin an effective lice treatment before returning.

Before returning to school:

- An appropriate lice treatment must have been completed
- No live crawling lice may remain
- The hair must be carefully combed and visible nits removed
- Proof or confirmation of treatment must be submitted to Miss Vanessa
- The home treatment plan, including any required second treatment, must be followed completely

Please notify us immediately if lice are discovered at home so that we can take appropriate precautions while protecting the family's privacy.

Children diagnosed with pinworms must remain home until treatment has begun and Miss Vanessa has been notified. Families should follow their healthcare provider's treatment and household hygiene instructions.

9. Allergies

Children experiencing a significant or uncontrolled allergic response should remain home until their symptoms are under control and they are comfortable enough to participate normally.

If your child has mild seasonal allergies that may resemble cold symptoms, please notify Miss Vanessa before drop-off. We can discuss the child's usual symptoms and make a joint plan. A prior history of allergies does not automatically explain new, worsening, or unusually heavy respiratory symptoms.

10. COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Viruses

Symptoms of COVID-19, influenza, RSV, and other respiratory viruses can look very similar. Children with fever, a new or worsening cough, sore throat, fatigue, body aches, significant congestion, or other active respiratory symptoms must remain home.

If a child tests positive for COVID-19, they must remain home for at least five days from the beginning of symptoms or the positive test, whichever occurred first. They must also be fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication, have symptoms that have substantially improved, and be well enough to participate fully before returning.

If a household member tests positive, please notify Miss Vanessa promptly. Depending on the child's age, exposure, symptoms, and current public-health guidance, Little Paws may require daily antigen testing and indoor masking for five days.

If a child is exposed outside the home, testing or temporary masking may also be requested. Little Paws may adjust these precautions when public-health guidance changes or when illness is spreading within our community.

Community Health Notifications

Families must notify Miss Vanessa promptly if their child is diagnosed with, tests positive for, or is strongly suspected of having a highly contagious illness or infestation. This includes, but is not limited to, norovirus, COVID-19, hand, foot and mouth disease, chickenpox, impetigo, conjunctivitis, strep throat, head lice, and pinworms.

When Little Paws learns of a case that may have exposed other members of our community, we will notify families as promptly as reasonably possible. The notice may include the illness, the likely exposure period, symptoms to watch for, and any temporary precautions or testing recommendations. We will preserve the privacy of the affected child and family and will not share their names or other identifying information, except when disclosure is required by law or requested by public-health authorities.

Medicine at School

If a child needs medicine during school hours, a parent must provide it in its original, clearly labeled container, along with written dosing instructions. Depending on the medication and circumstances, a prescription, physician authorization, or additional school form may be required. Please speak with Miss Vanessa before bringing any medication to school.

Parents must notify us before drop-off if their child has received any medication that morning, including fever reducers, cough or cold medicine, antibiotics, antihistamines, or medicine for constipation. This is important information for your child's care and safety.

Medication may not be used to mask symptoms or make a child appear well enough to attend. If a child requires symptom-relieving medication in order to manage the school day, they should remain home.

Pickup Due to Illness

If a child becomes ill at school, develops an excluding symptom, or is determined to be too unwell to participate after arrival, a parent, guardian, or authorized emergency contact must be available to pick them up within 30 minutes of our call.

Young children commonly experience several illnesses each year. We strongly encourage every family to make a backup plan with one or two authorized emergency contacts who can pick up promptly if a parent cannot leave work or another commitment.

A child who is sent home due to illness may not return the following school day unless Miss Vanessa determines that the symptom was clearly noninfectious and the child otherwise meets the return requirements.

Returning to School

Return dates are determined by the child's symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and overall wellbeing. A healthcare provider's note does not automatically override this policy if the child still has excluding symptoms or cannot participate fully.

Little Paws may request medical evaluation or written clearance when symptoms are unusual, persistent, difficult to identify, or potentially contagious. During an outbreak, we may temporarily adopt additional precautions or longer exclusion periods to protect the school community.

When in doubt about whether your child is well enough to attend, please keep them home. We will send sick children home, and that can be disruptive for the child, the family, and the classroom.

If you have any questions, please call or text Miss Vanessa **before leaving for school.**

Thank you so much for helping us keep Little Paws a healthy and comfortable place for everyone. We know that keeping a child home can be difficult and disruptive, and we are genuinely grateful for the honesty and consideration our families show one another. Following this policy helps protect not only the children, but also our teachers and every family they return home to at the end of the day.

We are very lucky to have such a thoughtful school community. Thank you for doing your part to care for it.

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____