

# Lil Explorers

School of Boerne



## Parent Handbook

Dear Parents:

Welcome to Lil Explorers School of Boerne! We are so excited and honored that you have chosen our school for your family. We ask that you take some time to read through this handbook. It is designed to not only answer some of your questions, but also let you know what we expect of you as a parent and member of our school family. We hope you find this handbook helpful. We want to remind you that our doors are open to you should you have any additional questions or just want to chat. We love getting to know our families and we look forward to doing so with you and your family.

We are thrilled to have you with us!

Greatest wishes,

Rhonda Retzloff  
Head of School

## Our Philosophy

We are committed to providing an educational program that is challenging, creative, nurturing and child-centered. By offering an inviting stimulating environment and developmentally appropriate programs we see that each child's social, emotional, and cognitive growth is encouraged and valued. We believe learning should be a joyful experience and encourage each child on the journey.

Our philosophy is based in our belief that children are competent individuals who can construct their own meaning of their experiences. The teacher's role is not to provide all the correct answers. Rather, the teacher provides the setting for discovery and learning.

Our approach is hands-on and multisensory. We recognize that children have a natural curiosity and a predisposition to enjoy the unexpected. Children engage in active exploration and investigation to make sense of their world. We strive to fuel children's investigative impulses by encouraging discovery, promoting questioning and challenging of ideas, and formulating connections of experience.

We respect children's multiple ways of demonstrating their intelligence. Children are encouraged to develop their individual strengths and each child's unique contribution to their community is appreciated. Their strengths are celebrated and valued while opportunities are created to provide exposure to, and enhancement of, other talents and skills. Children will be given the opportunity to express themselves through music, painting, drama, song, movement, and play.

Journey School's program draws from several models of child development including the Reggio Emilia model to create an inclusive, child-led, emergent program steeped in the belief that children are strong, capable, creative thinkers who can explore their ideas in a myriad of ways. Components which will be incorporated into our program include:

- Indoor and outdoor classrooms that are warm, home-like, beautiful and inspirational spaces
- Children, family, teachers, parents and community that are interactive and collaborative
- An awareness and appreciation of the natural world in which the environment is viewed as a co-teacher
- Opportunities for artistic expression in a variety of media
- Documentation of children's activities and exploration through a portfolio system

## Parent Participation

Lil Explorers School maintains an open-door policy and parents are welcome and invited at any point in the day. We invite parents to be involved in their child's school experience. If you have items, books, or experiences that reflect what the children are learning, please feel free to speak to your child's teacher about bringing them in to share. Parents are also welcome to assist in the classrooms in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- observation/wisdom sharers
- library book organizers
- classroom photographers
- story tellers
- project organizers

Parents are encouraged to present their own ideas for participation as well. Let us know your talents and interests so we can put them to good use! It is our hope that everyone in the child's community is informed and involved in the school as a whole.

Parent Ambassadors: Each classroom has a parent ambassador. This is among the most important roles in the school. The parent ambassadors are involved in all facets of the school community. They host classroom events, participate in all-school meet-ups, plan and organize special events, offer advice and direction to the leadership team and generally are the pulse-keepers for the school. Please see your child's teacher if you are interested in taking on this role.

## Communication

We use several avenues to communicate at Lil Explorers School. The list below is not inclusive. There are many additional ways to communicate at Lil Explorers. This list is intended to provide an overview only.

Daily:

1. We use an app called "Learning Genie" that lets parents know what their child ate that day and how long they napped, diaper changes, bottles, etc..
2. We have a Facebook page "For Parents Only" where the teachers post 10-30 pictures each day of the events of the day.
3. We visit with families frequently at pick-up and drop-off. Our school is very friendly and the office is used as our staff lounge and parent reception area often.
4. Reminder boards are posted on many of the classroom doors.

5. The welcome board in the front of the school is used to alert families to upcoming events, but is also used from time to time to tell families that we need something from them.
6. Many teachers share their phone numbers. Families are welcome to text the teachers. Teachers respond to texts during specials and break time

Weekly:

1. A school newsletter goes out to all of the parents.

Quarterly:

1. We hold quarterly Parent Committee Meetings where anything can be discussed including communication, portfolios and concerns with policies.
2. We hold quarterly committee meetings.

When Needed:

We frequently send mid-week updates to our families reminding them about things like forms needed, supplies reminders, contagious illnesses, changes in school calendar, or even policy changes. These can also be posted to the school website or Facebook page.

**A Special Note About Parent-Teacher Relationships:** We welcome our parents to have deep and meaningful relationships with their child's teachers. As a community, we place no barriers between parents and teachers and instead encourage interactions. We do understand that from time to time, more difficult conversations will have to take place. We know that these conversations are greatly improved by the existence of trusting relationships. We have a few overarching guidelines that we have put in place to help to frame the nature of your relationships with the teachers:

1. Lil Explorers School expects that communication between parents and teachers will remain positive and mutually respectful. We are happy to facilitate discussions if tension should ever arise. In general, the Lil Explorers School philosophy on conflict is that from conflict resolved can come deeper, more trusting relationships when both parties are willing to work together to find common ground. Our goal will always be to bring parties together to that end.
2. If an issue arises that needs to be negotiated, we ask that this be done outside of the presence of any of the children. We are happy to make time available for such discussions.
3. We are happy to discuss any aspect of your child's development, school policies, or goings-on in the school. However, we respect our children's rights to privacy and take confidentiality very seriously. We will not discuss any child with someone who is not a parent or family member.

4. It is important to remember that while communication is important, it is the teacher's primary responsibility to supervise the children at all times. If you are requiring more than just a quick check-in with your child's teacher, please schedule a time to visit by phone during nap time instead.

## **Classrooms, Our Ratios, and Total Group Size**

There are 8 full-day classrooms at our campus. There are plans for a future expansion to a total of 10 classrooms by 2020.

We follow the maximum ratio and group sizes listed below:

January 2019		
<u>Age Group</u>	<u>RatioTotal</u>	<u>Group Size</u>
Infants	3:10	10 Children
12-18 mos	2:10	10 Children
18-24 mos	2:14	14 Children
24-30 mos	2:18	20 Children
30-36 mos	2:20	20 Children
3 year old	2:20	20 Children
4 year old PreK	2:20	20 Children
School-Aged	3:30-35	35 Children

\*Staff numbers do not include specials (yoga, music, creative drama) teachers, school chef, or head of school.

\*\*Classrooms only combine at the start and close of the day.

## **Enrollment**

Lil Explorers School welcomes children from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as children with special needs provided that the child's needs can be met with reasonable accommodations. Lil Explorers School recognizes that all children bring their own unique gifts to our community, thus enriching the environment for us all.

\*We reserve the right to maintain a balance between ages and gender in each classroom.

Admissions Deadlines: We offer a rolling admission. To schedule a tour, please contact the school.

Deposits: In order to hold an available opening for your child, a non-refundable deposit of \$250 and a signed Enrollment Agreement must be returned within three days from the date the spot was offered. This deposit will be applied to your first month of enrollment. If your child does not

attend, or if the spot has been held for longer than 30 days, the deposit is then forfeited.

Disenrollment: Lil Explorers School requires 30 days notice of disenrollment. For instance, if your last day is December 31, you must give notice on November 30 in order to owe no tuition for the month of January.

Waiting List: If there are no openings available at the time of your application, your child will be placed on the waiting list and you will be notified when a space becomes available.

Registration Fee: A registration fee of \$175 will be required on or before your child's first day of school. This is a one-time fee and is non-refundable. This fee may be broken down into smaller payments upon request and at the discretion of the Head of School. This is in lieu of an annual supply fee.

## **Tuition and Fees**

It is our intention to handle all financial transactions with integrity and fairness. As a community, we manage this piece through an offsite CFO service. Tuition is debited from bank accounts on the last day of each month for the month to come.

Tuition includes: Classroom instruction, breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon snack, yoga class, creative drama class, spanish class, gardening and musical instruction.

Tuition Discounts: A 10% tuition reduction will be given to families enrolling more than one child. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition rate in the family. Tuition may not be prorated for any circumstance. Tuition will remain the same regardless of any absence, vacation, holiday or portion of the month used. Tuition will be adjusted annually in order to increase teacher compensation.

Fees:

1. \$25 fee will be charged for any returned ACH debit.
2. If tuition is not able to be collected by the 15th day of the month, there will be a \$30 late fee and/or families may be disenrolled and any fees paid forfeited. Upon disenrollment, families will need to reapply and follow the enrollment procedure as stated above.
3. Upon disenrollment for tuition related issues, priority may be given to children on the waiting list.
4. Late pick-up fee is \$1/minute per child. Please see additional information in "Late Policy"



## Our Day

Each classroom has its own unique personality, flow, schedule and activities. However, some components that are incorporated into the regular schedule for all classrooms are:

### 1. Whole Group Activities

Children gather in the mornings for sharing, songs, and discussion of the day's events. Our understanding that intelligence is constructed in a social setting creates the basis for our belief that children's thinking is stimulated through interactions with others. Activities to expand cognition, stimulate new thoughts, and reflect on observations are incorporated. In addition to the morning meeting time, children generally are together as a whole classroom group for meal times, nap time, and morning and afternoon outdoor play.

### 2. Small Group Activities

During much of the day, we break into smaller groups in which a teacher works with a small group of children. This small group time is used for investigation, discussion, and experimentation that may not be possible within the larger group. At times, these are more teacher-directed activities such as a planned art activity or experiment and offers a balance to the child-directed play that is predominate during the day. This time allows us the opportunity to really tune-in and hear the children's thoughts and ideas, expand on activities experienced in the larger group, and work on particular developmental areas.

### 3. Free Choice Center Time

Children are encouraged to make their own choices for daily activities from a variety of play areas in the classrooms. Through independently making decisions about how they spend their time, children are empowered to explore and discover. In addition to the permanent materials in our centers that serve as our classroom staples, unique materials are also introduced to spark interest and encourage creative exploration.

\*Parents can find weekly activity schedules posted in their child's classrooms.

### 4. Meals

We believe that mealtimes are a vital portion of the children's daily experience. It is an opportunity to try new foods, to take risks and discover new tastes, a chance to connect to their world around them, and practice independence. It is a time to listen to each other and be heard, to practice turn taking and to expand their vocabulary. It is also an opportunity for us to demonstrate our belief that children are capable and competent eaters. All the children, from toddlers to preschoolers clean up after themselves. We do not assume that children have only a limited repertoire of foods. Instead, we offer creative and delicious meals prepared by our chef daily.



Children are encouraged, but never forced to eat. Children are offered seconds of all foods and are encouraged to serve themselves. Lunch is served family style. Children sit at tables in their small groups. Meals are prepared using fresh, mostly organic ingredients as well as locally sourced organic foods when possible. Our chef creates meals around seasonal fruits and vegetables. Children drink milk at lunchtime daily. A detailed description of each day's menu is posted on the menu board and on the school's Facebook page.

**Food Allergies and Preferences:** Whenever possible, Lil Explorers School will offer alternative foods to our children with food allergies or families with food preferences. It is important to remember that the school chef is cooking in a small space for the entire campus. While it is our intention to serve all children, on occasion, we may decline enrollment if we are not able to make reasonable food accommodations, or if a family's food preferences are too great for our chef to manage.

**Outside Food:** With the exception of infant foods and alternative milks, we do not allow any outside food to be brought onto the campus. However, we love to celebrate birthdays and holidays and will allow parents to bring treats for their child's class during this special time.

#### 5. Rest time

Between approximately 1pm and 3pm, the school rests. This is naptime for most children. Others rest and then read or listen to music while respect their friends' need for sleep. Teachers meet with each other during this time to plan, reflect, and consult. This time is also used for teachers to meet with the Program Manager, the Head of School, or to write observations of the children.

#### 6. Outdoor learning

We spend a great amount of time outdoors in all weather conditions. Rainy days mean puddles and streams. And mud!! Cool days are a chance to see our breath. Children tend to our gardens, planting seeds, watering, and picking vegetables. On warm days it is very common for us to come in only to use the restrooms. We may even picnic and eat outside.

### **Special Considerations About Arrival and Departure**

Our full-day program is open from 6:30am to 6:30pm. Parents are required to deliver their child into the classroom where they must sign their child in on the attendance sheet. It is the responsibility of the parent to alert staff to their child's arrival. This can be as simple as a wave and a "Good morning". However, it is important that eye contact is made and you receive

acknowledgement from the teacher that he or she is aware your child is present.

**Morning Transition:** Transitioning into the classroom in the morning can be a particularly difficult time for some children emotionally. Establishing a routine for drop-off that includes placing the child's things in their cubby, greeting the teachers, kissing or hugging, or even a special handshake makes this transition from home to school less stressful for the child (and the parent!). Extended good-byes can cause undue distress for the child. We always want parents to feel welcome in their child's classroom. However, usually it is better to read a book, tour the room, or hear about a project at pick-up at the end of the day when you have re-joined your child than in the morning when your child may already be anxious about your leaving.

**End of the Day:** At the end of the day please remember to sign your child out. Only previously authorized adults will be allowed to pick-up a child, even in case of an emergency. If we do not recognize the person picking your child up, we will ask for identification. We will not release a child to a person who is not on a pick-up list AND presents a valid photo ID drivers license. It is very important that parents maintain current information on their contact list and authorized pick-up list.

We ask that children be picked up at least 15 minutes prior to the close of school so that each child can have time to share their accomplishments, discoveries, and artwork before they go home.

Please also note that at the end of the day, we are often out on the playground where the children may be able to see cars pulling into the parking lot. It is amazing how many children can identify their friends' parent's car! After parking, it is very helpful for us if you walk directly into the school and visit with other parents after retrieving your child. It can be very frustrating for your child to see you, but not be able to get to you!

This is one of the most important things you can do to support the teachers and your child. Your child has been working very hard all day and is anxiously awaiting your arrival at the end of the day. It is important that your child have the opportunity to experience a smooth, calm, and most importantly unhurried reunion with you.

In addition, it is critical for our teachers to be supported at this late hour as well. We build in time at the end of their day to clean up and get organized for the next day and it is extremely important that this time is used for this purpose. We value their time with us as well as their time for their own lives and are very serious in our efforts to allow them to be efficient and focused so that they can leave when their day is done.

## **Late Policy**

Lil Explorers School staff requests that parents respect the closing time of our day. Please arrive at Lil Explorers School by no later than 6:00 PM in order to allow time for your child to gather their belongings and check in with the teacher if needed. When a parent is late to pick up their child, anxiety is felt by everyone, the parent, the teacher, and most importantly, the child. We cannot stress the importance of this enough. The school closes entirely at 6:30 pm.

If an emergency arises, please notify the school as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made. If your child is not picked up on time, even with prior notice, the following late fees will apply:

\$1 per minute per child. For example, if a parent were to arrive at 6:41 pm, to pick up their two children, they would pay \$11 for each child, or \$22.

This fee goes to the staff member who is staying late with the child and must be paid upon arrival.

Please know that asking for this fee is most assuredly one of our teachers least favorite activities. We ask that parents come prepared to pay this fee when they are late.

\*If a child has not been picked up by 6:30 pm Lil Explorers School staff will attempt to reach both parents using all known contact numbers, then all listed emergency contact telephone numbers. In the event that no listed emergency contact is reached, at 6:45 pm the Boerne Police Office will be contacted for help.

## **Transitioning Into New Classrooms**

Lil Explorers School staff is very invested in the cognitive, emotional and social development of all of the children entrusted to our care. We strive to present our children with stimulating and challenging opportunities daily and to observe and record the children regularly in order to monitor and document their growth and maturation.

While we roughly outline an age range for each of our rooms, our program is based upon the cognitive, emotional and social development of our children and not chronological age.

At times, children may fall above or below the average chronological age range for a given classroom. Lil Explorers School staff believes that children

move at their own pace and that given appropriate support and opportunities they will thrive in their own way at the right time for their own developmental process. We believe that it is our job to provide those opportunities and to group children of similar developmental levels together.

Teachers work very closely together with the Head of School and parents to plan for a child to leave one room and join another. When this occurs, the child and their parents will be offered the next available opening in the appropriate classroom. As our community is very stable as a whole space may not become readily available in the next classroom. As a general rule, most children move from one class to the next in small groups during the summer months. When this occurs, teachers and the Head of School work closely in order to consider existing friendships as well as the developmental progress of each child in order to compile class lists. While we attempt to accommodate most parent requests, there are times when this is just not possible. We ask our parent community to understand the enormity of the task and the challenges that come along with these choices.

## **Potty Training**

When your child is ready, we will assist in making the transition from diapers to underwear. We consider a child ready when they are able to initiate the request to go to the potty. When your child is ready and you are beginning to work together at home, it is critical that you let your teacher know. Our teachers are potty experts and are ready and willing to work individually with each family to develop a plan for success for each child. While each child is different we do follow several guidelines during this process:

Children should remain in diapers or pull-ups while potty training. Children who are being taken to the potty to “try” are in the practicing stage. We will practice at school several times a day during this period. Children who are practicing should not come to school in regular underwear until accidents are infrequent at school and at home.

We are happy to use pull-ups but we do ask that only pull-ups with Velcro sides be sent to school with your child.

Once your child is reliably using the potty with minimal accidents at school and at home we are ready for regular underwear at school. We ask that you continue to send several changes of clothes for the first few months in underwear. When accidents happen, our approach is to comfort the child as well as to amend the bathroom schedule to include more frequent visits until reliability is restored.

## **A Special Note to the Parents of Infants:**

Infant parents are asked to provide all foods for their babies until their 1st birthday. We have provided a comfortable place in the infant room where mothers can breastfeed their child. All of our parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk. Parents bringing children to the infant room must label all foods with their child's name and the date. All foods except breast milk must be provided daily. Breast milk may be frozen in the classroom freezer as long as it is labeled and dated. Any bottle or jar that is not labeled and dated will not be served under any circumstances. We ask that food from home be healthy, nutritious, and easily consumed by the baby.

### **Safe Sleep Policy:**

Infants are not allowed to sleep in a restrictive device. If an infant falls asleep in a restrictive device, the infant must be removed from the device and placed in a crib as soon as possible. Infants may sleep in a restrictive device if you have a completed Sleep Exception Form that includes a signed statement from a health-care professional stating that the child sleeping in a restrictive device is medically necessary.

Infants not yet able to turn over on their own must be placed in a face-up sleeping position in the infant's own crib, unless you have a completed Sleep Exception Form that includes a signed statement from a health-care professional stating that a different sleeping position for the child is medically necessary.

You may not lay a swaddled infant down to sleep or rest on any surface at any time unless you have a completed Sleep Exception Form that includes a signed statement from a health-care professional stating that swaddling the child for sleeping purposes is medically necessary.

All cribs must have: A firm, flat mattress that snugly fits the sides of the crib and that is specifically designed for use with the crib model number. The mattress must not be supplemented with additional foam material or pads. Sheets must fit snugly and do not present an entanglement hazard. A mattress that is waterproof or washable with secure mattress support hangers, and no loose hardware or improperly installed or damaged parts. Except for a tight fitting sheet, the crib must be bare for an infant younger than 12 months of age.

## **Discipline and Behavior Management**

We recognize that learning self-control is a normal part of growth and development. As a school, we employ Conscious Discipline as our model of teaching children self-regulation skills. Our discipline policy is designed to promote positive behavior by using praise and positive reinforcement to shape behavior in the classroom.

If behavior escalates or becomes a disruption to others, a teacher may remove a child from a situation for a short period of time in order to have a one-on-one moment. This time is used to guide the child as they calm themselves, and to help reflect and refocus before returning to the group. Should a child demonstrate ongoing difficulty in the classroom, parents will be invited to meet with the teachers and Head of School in order to discuss options and strategies.

During this parent and teacher meeting, a behavior plan may be put into place by the Head of School at her sole discretion. A behavior plan is designed to address the child's present behavior by evaluating the environment, instruction, and interactions around the child in order to support the development of greater self-regulation. Plans can vary from simple strategies such as developing a plan to support a child who is having difficulty at drop-off by designing a predictable routine or song to sing, to a more complex plan in which teachers and parents agree on strategies to prevent and/or respond to a challenging behavior while developing and implementing techniques to teach a replacement behavior. Teachers, parents, and the Head of School are involved in creating, implementing, and reviewing the plan for effectiveness.

If a more intensive plan is appropriate to the circumstances, the Head of School may invite a behavioral specialist into the classroom to observe the child's behavior. The decision to involve a behavioral specialist is again at the sole discretion of the Head of School. If a more intensive intervention is agreed upon, additional providers will be welcomed into the classroom with the understanding that the cost for such services will be the sole responsibility of the parent, and that the provider must agree to abide by all policies and procedures at the school and outlined in this handbook.

If a child's behavior is dangerous to themselves or others, or of an ongoing uncontrollable basis and/or there is no response to the interventions put in place, and/or the child's family are not a supportive, active participant in our efforts to find solutions to the behavior challenges, the child may be disenrolled from Lil Explorers School without notice.

## **Things Your Child Should Bring to School**

Children should wear washable play clothes to school that are comfortable and appropriate for the season. We play hard and get messy often. Please do not send your child in their "best clothes." We encourage creativity and exploration and with that comes dirt, paint, clay, potions, mulch, and many other interesting materials encountered during the day. We change clothes

often so children need at least two clean and weather appropriate changes of clothing every day in their cubby including shirts, pants, undergarments, socks and shoes.

The children all sleep on cots at naptime. Parents are asked to bring in a standard crib sheet each Monday for the week to come. Parents are also asked to take the dirty sheets home to be washed on Friday. If your child has a special blanket or stuffed animal that is required during sleep time, please have it available on a regular basis. Otherwise, toys and other personal items should be left at home at all times. In addition, please keep candy, gum, money, purses and bags and jewelry at home. These items can be difficult to share, are choking hazards, and can easily get lost or broken.

Children are welcome to bring books to share at story time. Books are always welcome!!

Please label everything that comes to school! It is amazing the amount of lovely clothes, books and shoes that end up in our lost and found every year!

## **Celebrations**

Children's birthdays are an exciting time and we enjoy sharing in the joy of these celebrations. We usually celebrate children's birthdays during our afternoon snack time at around 3:00 pm. Parents are welcome to come and help us serve snack and enjoy the festivities with their child. For birthdays, you are welcome to bring snacks and/or treats for your child. We will sing "Happy Birthday" and make a special birthday crown for your child to wear on their special day. A birthday snack is not at all necessary, just icing on the cake.

## **School Calendar**

A yearly schedule of holidays and vacations will be provided to you upon enrollment and on our weekly newsletter. Copies are available by request.

## **Donations**

Lil Explorers School appreciates parent donations and gifts to classrooms. Any classroom addition must be approved in advance by the Head of School. Materials donated to the school become the property of the school and may be circulated throughout the school without consulting the donor. Lil Explorers School also reserves the right to discard any material donated to the school without consulting the donor.



## **Child Abuse and Neglect Policy**

Lil Explorers School and its staff are mandated by the State of Texas to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services. Our staff are provided regular and ongoing training in recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect. All families are encouraged to become aware of signs of abuse or neglect. You can access the the Texas Abuse and Neglect hotline at 1-800-252-5400. The Local Licensing office can be accessed online at [dfps.state.tx.us](http://dfps.state.tx.us) or at 210-337-3399. The closest DFPS office is located at 216 Market Avenue #100, Boerne TX

## **Child Care Licensing**

Lil Explorers School is licensed by the Department of Family and Protective Services. You can review a copy of the most recent inspection hanging up in the office. You can also locate the Minimum Standards on their website at [dfps.state.tx.us](http://dfps.state.tx.us)

## **Inclement Weather Policy**

Lil Explorers School follows the recommendations of the Boerne Independent School District. Changes in schedule due to inclement weather will be posted on the Learning Genie app by 6:30 am. It will also be posted to the Facebook page.

## **Gang-Free Zone Policy**

Lil Explorers School and its property are designated gang-free zones. Any illegal activity will be reported immediately to the police.

## **Health Policy**

Parents will be notified immediately if a child is vomiting, has more than three diarrhea episodes, displays symptoms of a contagious illness, or is running a temperature over 100.5 degrees. It is critical that all efforts are made to come to the school to pick up the child as soon as possible. Please know that before we make that call, we have done everything in our power to make the child comfortable and meet the child's needs. When we make the decision to call the parent, we do so knowing that we are asking the parent to leave their work or other responsibilities. While we understand the difficulties this causes, it is our job to keep all of our children safe and healthy, including

the child who is not feeling well. When a child is vomiting or feverish, we move the child to a quiet area away from the other children. If it is going to be more than one hour before you are able to arrive to pick up your child, we ask that you make arrangements for another person on your authorized pick up list to come for the child.

A child must be symptom-free, without a fever for 24 hours and well enough to participate in all activities, including outdoor play, before returning to school. While we respect the constraints and expectations of our families' workplaces, it is our job to protect the children in our care and to create the healthiest environment as possible for the children and teachers.

We ask that parents use good judgment when considering bringing their child back to school after an illness. For example, if a child is sent home in the afternoon due to illness, it is best for the child to stay at home the entire next day, not returning until the morning of the following day. In addition, if a child is sick with a contagious illness, it is best practice for parents to also keep siblings at home to try to limit further exposure. We work very hard to keep the school germ free by washing our hands often, disinfecting toys, and teaching the children healthy practices such as coughing into their elbow and wiping noses with a tissue. We ask our families to support our efforts by always washing hands upon arrival, informing us about illnesses, and maintaining healthy practices in their homes.

Parents are asked to notify the school if a child is going to be absent from school, particularly if this is due to a contagious illness or infestation such as chicken pox, lice, etc.

In these cases, parents of the child's classmates will be notified that there is an illness or infestation in the room. Your child's privacy will be respected and names will not be used.

We do not require our children to be vaccinated. We do encourage all of our families to get vaccinated but if not to provide us with an affidavit from the Texas Department of State Health Services. Hearing and Vision screenings will be required when your child turns four or an affidavit stating that the vision or hearing screening conflicts with the tenets or practices of a church or religious denomination of which the affiant is an adherent or member.

## **Medication Policy**

As a group care setting for well children, Lil Explorers School staff members will not administer any prescription medication at any time without a doctor's note and prescription. In addition, Lil Explorers School teachers will not administer any over the counter medications without a completed and signed medication form available from your child's teacher.

Sunscreen/bug spray is applied twice a day in the summer months. Parents are asked to provide sunscreen and bug spray if needed. Parents are asked to apply sunscreen/bug spray in the morning before arriving to school.

## **Vaccine-preventable diseases**

Lil Explorers school does not require staff to obtain any specific vaccines. Employees must follow these guidelines in order to protect children in care from exposure to disease, such as the use of protective medical equipment, including gloves and masks, based on the level of risk the employee presents to children by the employee's routine and direct exposure to children.

We do require that every child have a copy of their updated immunization record in their files and that these be updated as the children receive additional vaccinations. Any parent who chooses not to vaccinate their child, must have a signed copy of the Immunization Exemption Certificate provided by their pediatrician in our files.

## **Hearing and Vision Screening**

Any child who is 4 years old, must have a vision and hearing screening conducted by a physician. Lil Explorers School must have a copy of this certificate in each 4 year old child's file.

## **First Aid/Medical Emergency Policy**

All employees are CPR and first aid certified. In case of an accident, staff members will use standard first aid procedures. If we feel medical attention is required, we will call the proper emergency personnel and then call your designated contacts.

If an accident or injury occurs during the day that does not require a doctor's attention, our teachers will complete an "Oops Form". This form outlines specifically what occurred and our response. For example, if a child falls and cuts his knee, we fill out the form so that you know he fell and that we responded by cleaning the cut and putting on a band-aid. If a child causes harm to another child, such as a bite or scratch, we use the Oops for both the child harmed and the child who caused the incident. We do not share the children's names with the other families. For example, the Oops Form might state: "John was bitten on his arm today by a friend. We washed the area, applied a cold ice pack, and gave him lots of hugs and kisses." If your child happens to be the one who did the biting, we would state: "John bit a friend today..."

## **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

In the event of an emergency that allows for evacuation, the following will be followed:

- All children will evacuate to the grove of trees in front of the chef house on our school's property. The school's chef, chef's assistant, head of school, assistant head of school, and facilities director will assist the children under 24 months old to be carried.
- Families will be contacted starting with parents. If parents cannot be contacted, the staff will begin calling those listed on the authorized pick-up list.

## **Animals**

We do have animals on the premises, and we ensure that caregivers and children practice good hygiene and handwashing after handling or coming into contact with an animal and items used by an animal, such as water bowls, food bowls, and cages.

## **Field Trips**

We do not participate in field trips at this time.

## **Water Activities**

We will participate in sprinkler play, but do not have a pool or any other bodies of water on the premises.

## **Transportation Policy**

We do not provide transportation at this time. We ask for permission to participate in planned activities outside of the playground fences, including activities on campus, but outside the regular playground fences.

## Appendix

Please use the health guide below to help make decisions about the appropriateness of bringing your child to school.

Symptom: Coughing and/or Runny nose

Recommendation :

If cough is mild and intermittent (your child can go 15 minutes between coughs), he or she is considered safe to attend school. If the cough is persistent, this indicates that the infection can spread through cough droplets. If discharge is clear, your child is safe. However, children with continual runny noses (wiping needed every 10 minutes) can be very demanding for teachers. Please use your discretion. If the discharge is thick and discolored, it is considered infectious.

Symptom: Fever

Rule:

Your child needs to be free of fever (defined as a temperature over 100.5 degrees) for 24 hours to be considered free of infection.

Symptom: Sore Throat/Ear Infection

Recommendation:

Unless accompanied by other symptoms, your child is considered safe to attend. Please simply judge how your child feels.

Symptom: Conjunctivitis

Rule:

Considered infectious. Children may not be in school until they have received a dose of medication in each infected eye.

Symptom: Diarrhea

Rule:

More than 3 loose stools in a single day should be considered infectious and given a 24-hour waiting period.