

Forest Hill Montessori School

Parent Handbook



"Inspired, joyful and purposeful learning."

Welcome!

Established in 1996, Forest Hill Montessori School is an independent school dedicated to educating and nurturing the whole child. Our CCMA (Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators) accredited school offers an authentic and progressive Montessori education in a warm and vibrant learning environment. Here, children can explore, discover and develop as intelligent, confident and compassionate individuals. Our positive and friendly environment truly feels like an extended family.

Forest Hill Montessori School embodies the very essence of what a school should be – a vibrant community of students who are excited to learn, a place where open communication, engaged and dedicated teachers, bright classrooms and a stimulating and challenging curriculum encourage students to thrive. Our programs inspire and promote intellectual curiosity, creativity and individual growth through the integration of academics, arts, athletics, community service and leadership. It is a joy to watch our students blossom into the creative, confident and compassionate leaders of tomorrow.

The staff and administration at Forest Hill Montessori School want to welcome you and your child into our Montessori community. This parent handbook includes information about our school, our mission statement and philosophies, our programs, our policies and our fees.

Please read this handbook thoroughly and keep it handy. We will be reviewing and updating this handbook annually and advising you of any changes. We ask that you sign the last page and return it to school on your child's first day.

At Forest Hill Montessori School, open communication and parent visits to our classrooms are encouraged. We welcome your feedback and feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns that you may have. Again, welcome to our, and your school!



Sandra Bosnar-Dale and Isabelle Kunicki
Co-founders and Directors

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Mission and Values

Our mission at Forest Hill Montessori School is to empower children to reach their fullest potential as confident, creative and compassionate young people and to joyfully cultivate a genuine desire for life-long learning through inspired, joyful and purposeful learning.

By providing an intellectually stimulating and developmentally appropriate learning environment, we engage young minds and create opportunities for them to find their passion and become ethical and responsible contributors to their local and global communities. We pride ourselves on being a uniquely warm and nurturing school community, which enhances each child's learning experience. We recognize and embrace the importance of community, cooperation, kindness and the acceptance of each person as a unique individual.

As a school community, we value:

- respect for self and others
- honesty and integrity
- grace and resilience
- creativity and imagination
- critical thinking and creative problem solving
- curiosity and innovation
- courage and determination
- inclusion of diverse perspectives and cultures
- safety and security in our school environment
- environmental responsibility, compassion and kindness

Accreditation

We are a CCMA accredited school. The Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators is an association which provides mutual support and services to its members and acts as a unified voice to organizations and agencies. The CCMA promotes standards of excellence for Canadian Montessori educators and programs in order to help children reach their full potential.

The Montessori Program

The Montessori method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, embraces a child-centred educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time-tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world. The Montessori method embraces a student-centred approach to education, which encourages each child to reach their full potential through creativity, curiosity, exploration and independent thinking.

Montessori is the original educational system dedicated to the development of the whole child and remains on the cutting edge of current thinking in education, brain research and

child development. Its longevity and continuing relevance is due to Dr. Maria Montessori's years of intense study of children and how they learn and grow. The carefully designed and sequenced materials engage the child and support physical, intellectual and emotional development at each stage of growth.

The Montessori method views the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively.

The key components of Montessori classrooms are the multi-age groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time and guided choice of work activity. In addition, the full-range of specially designed Montessori learning materials are meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing environment.

The trained Montessori teacher, the child and the environment create a learning triangle. The classroom is prepared by the teacher to encourage independence, freedom within limits and a sense of order. The child, through individual choice, makes use of what the environment offers to develop himself/herself, interacting with the teacher when support and/or guidance are needed.

Multi-age groupings are a hallmark of the Montessori method. Younger children learn from older children and older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered to the younger children. This arrangement also mirrors the real world, where individuals work, collaborate and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions.

Early Years Learning (Program Statement)

Our Montessori programs go hand in hand with the Ministry of Education's Early Years pedagogy. We value the cooperative spirit that we foster here at FHMS, and we look forward to working with all of our children, families and educators as a strong team, building positive and responsive relationships. At FHMS, our classrooms are designed specifically to create a sense of belonging between children, adults and the world around them. A Montessori child learns to care deeply for their environment, in every sense of the word. Our school provides the ideal environment to allow the child to experience and engage in active, creative and meaningful exploration, play, inquiry and self-expression, which leads to the healthy development of their sense of self and teaches them to be strong and caring citizens of the world

How Does Learning Happen?

Forest Hill Montessori School's interpretation of the Montessori pedagogy and programming is consistent with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement as set out in "*How Does Learning Happen (HDLH)?*" It is important to note that the Montessori pedagogy often describes children's activities as 'work', whereas HDLH describes children's activity as 'play'. All of these activities, as experienced by a child, are one in the

same. This program statement will be reviewed with childcare staff and volunteers annually or whenever an amendment is made.

FHMS holds the view that all children are competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. Our program statement describes our goals for children at FHMS and the approaches that we implement to meet those goals. We promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children in our care by diligently meeting all the requirements of Ontario Regulation 137/15 (Child Care and Early Years Act).

We support positive and responsive interactions among children, parents, child-care providers and staff by communicating, promoting and adhering to our school's mission statement and core values. These are communicated in our staff policies, on our website and in the parent handbook, and these are applied to all members of the FHMS community – staff, students, parents, volunteers, observers and visitors. We encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and we support their ability to self-regulate by having mixed-age Montessori communities where children remain with the same adults for three years. This provides many opportunities for interactions with children older and younger than themselves, as well as with adults. Our Grace and Courtesy curriculum gives teachers a set of tools and skills to follow in which to deliberately role model and teach these skills to the children.

We foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry by having fully equipped Montessori learning environments in which activities are present for the full range of ages in each room. There are activities that assist children to become independent or able to assist others in the care of the self, care of the environment and care of others (grace and courtesy); activities to explore and refine all the senses as well as discover sequencing and order; activities to increase vocabulary, encourage discussion, explore sounds, and begin to develop the process of writing and reading; and activities to develop number sense, numeracy, understanding of large quantities, the mathematical operations, geometry and even rudimentary algebra concepts and then many more activities to introduce all of the wonderful things in our world. In addition, there are activities for cutting, colouring, painting, exploring colour, shape and texture, pasting, etc. Children understand where everything is kept and they are able to choose and return things independently alongside their friends.

We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences. All Montessori materials are introduced to a child by an adult or by another child, and while the Montessori adults are always observing children to see what support each child might need, in order to meet the needs of each child, they are very sensitive to allowing children their own initiative as this most often results in children being deeply engaged and peaceful in what they are doing. Adults are always trying to find exactly the right moment to introduce a child to something new so that they have enough time to master something but also are always being gently challenged.

We plan for, and create, positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported by using the Montessori curriculum and materials that have been proven through research to be effective with children from all socio-economic and cultural groups. We incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of all of the children by allowing the children to manage and make free choices for a great deal of their day. Children can choose to move about the class carrying things or building things, or sit quietly at a table moving intricate pieces. Children can choose to have snack or a drink when they are hungry or thirsty; they do not have to wait for the whole group (Casa age). We have a lovely outdoor play area that the children enjoy for up to two hours per day.

We foster the engagement of ongoing communication with parents, and their children, about the program by having regular parent/teacher meetings and Curriculum Evenings to explain what is happening in the classrooms, inviting parents in to observe their children, sending out bi-weekly school newsletters and monthly class newsletters, as well as sending home little explanations of the creations that children bring home. Parents can access their child's teacher by email, by leaving a message with the office or by chatting briefly at the door during arrival and dismissal. We also have several whole school events that are opportunities for socializing and building community spirit such as our Corn Roast, Winter Festival, Parent's Tea Party and Spring Picnic. The school holds regular Coffee Mornings with parents and administration to help foster open communication and a sense of community. We also have an active and engaged FHMS Parents' Association that helps to support the school with fundraising initiatives and community building events.

We welcome specialists from CCAC and find spaces for them to work with our children and we meet with the parents and these specialists as necessary. We support the ongoing professional development of our staff by sending them to, and hosting, a variety of educational and interesting workshops related to Montessori and child development. We hold a two-week staff training session every August at which time all staff review and complete all necessary documentation required by Ontario Regulation 137/15. At the beginning of each year, our staff also set goals for themselves in discussion with their direct reports and we plan for how to support them in the achievement of those goals. We have a budget dedicated to Professional Development that any staff person can access depending on their particular needs. We have Professional Development days set aside each year to meet as a whole staff and in smaller groups to review our work and plan for improvements. Our administrative Directors walk about the school regularly, observing in classes and then engaging the staff in conversation about their own personal observations. We also meet weekly as an administrative team to discuss ongoing issues or topics of particular interest. Each staff member also spends time at least once a year observing in another's class and giving feedback and asking questions for the purpose of collaborative learning.

We document and review the impact of the above strategies on the children and their families through observation, conversation, meetings, surveys, etc. all in accordance with our Mission Statement and our core values at Forest Hill Montessori School.

Our Team

Our wonderful, dedicated team of teachers, directors, administrators and assistants are excited for what promises to be an exciting and successful school year. Our office administrators are here to help and guide our parents and families in all aspects of school life. Feel free to get in touch with them via email at info@foresthillmontessorischool.com.

Co-Founders & Directors

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Admissions and Administration

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Our Classrooms

Each of our classrooms has been given a specific tree name. Naming the classrooms allows parents and students to easily identify the classroom their child is in. The use of tree names resonates deeply with our school philosophy of nurturing the whole child, planting the seeds for a love of lifelong learning, and growing roots within our school community.

School Hours

Toddler, Pre-Primary and Primary (Casa) Programs

Morning	8:45 am to 11:45 am
Full-Day	8:45 am to 3:45 pm
Morning Extended Care	7:45 am to 8:45 am
Afternoon Extended Care	3:45 pm to 6:00 pm

Elementary Program

Elementary Full-Day	8:45 am to 3:45 pm
Morning Extended Care	7:45 am to 8:45 am
Afternoon Extended Care	3:45 pm to 6:00 pm

Please note that hours during summer programming are:

- **9 am to 4 pm**
- Morning Extended Care is from **8 to 9 am**
- Afternoon Extended Care is from **4 to 5 pm**

Admissions and Enrolment

Forest Hill Montessori School has a non-discriminatory policy relative to race, religion and national origin with respect to admission of students, as well as to the employment of faculty and administrative staff.

We encourage parents to come in for a tour of our campuses and to speak with one of our directors about the enrolment of your child. Interested parents should submit their completed application form along with the \$500 application fee. This is a one-time fee that is charged to all new students. The application fee guarantees your child's spot at our school for a specified amount of time (to be determined by Office Staff and/or Directors). Once a family has decided to complete the enrolment process, the completed and signed registration form and fee schedule, along with all applicable payments (credit card or cheques), should be submitted to the office prior to March 1. After March 1, the Option A Advanced Payment method is no longer available and parents are welcome to choose Option B or C as their payment method. Please note that no student is considered enrolled

at Forest Hill Montessori School until all funds are received, and that there are no refunds of any (and all) fees and monies paid to Forest Hill Montessori School.

Specific campus and classroom placements cannot be guaranteed. There are many factors that go into the make-up of the classrooms each year, including balancing girls/ boys, age ratios and Ministry licensing requirements. For these reasons we are unable to accommodate requests for a particular campus or specific classrooms/teachers. The school also reserves the right to move up any student deemed “ready” into the proceeding program level. The movement from classroom to classroom will be completed through a transition period ensuring the child’s readiness. Families will be provided with your child’s specific classroom/teacher placement 3 to 6 weeks prior to your child’s scheduled start date.

Tuition Deposit

For our Half-Day students, there is a \$1500 deposit due upon enrolment, and for our Full-Day students, a \$2000 deposit is due upon enrolment. This deposit is applied towards the applicable tuition fees (please see Tuition Fee Schedules).

Tuition Fees

Please refer to the Tuition Fee Schedules that you have received in your enrolment package or on our website for current fees.

All post-dated cheques must be submitted to the school prior to the start of your child’s school year. All returned cheques will be charged an N.S.F. fee of \$40.00. All monies paid to Forest Hill Montessori School are non-refundable.

Tax Receipts

Tax receipts and receipts in general are issued by the school upon request. If needed, please ask the office for your (tax) receipt.

Programming Options for Students

September to June Only

This option reflects a traditional school year enrolment, including PD Days, Winter Break and March Break (see calendar for specific dates).

September to June + Summer Program

This enrolment option will follow the traditional school year enrolment (as above), but will also include our Summer Program option. School will be closed as outlined above, as well as 1 (one) week after the last day of school (Summer Program commences on the Monday) and 2 (two) weeks prior to the commencement of our school year (school starts the day after Labour Day).

Summer Program Only

This program offers Summer Programming only, offered 1 (one) week after the end of our September to June school year and runs for 8 (eight) weeks. Enrolment in Summer Programming *does not guarantee enrolment for a September start.*

Discharge and Withdrawal Policies

Providing an environment conducive to our philosophies is one of our primary objectives. The safety of our community is a priority; therefore, the provision of our service is conditional on both student behaviour and parent treatment of the school and staff. Forest Hill Montessori School reserves the right to suspend, dismiss or withdraw services for the following reasons:

- Outstanding fees – tuition or other.
- Inappropriate behaviour by a parent towards staff, other parents or students, such as being belligerent, abusive, swearing or harassing.
- Inappropriate behaviour by a student towards staff or other students such as being belligerent, swearing, violent or threatening.
- Parent refusal or inability to abide by the policies and procedures as laid out in the parent handbook.
- If we feel the student is not benefiting from the environment and program that we provide, or if the best interests of the school or classroom are being compromised by a student's ongoing enrolment.
- If the behaviour of a parent or guardian is not conducive to our school values and philosophies.

If it is necessary to withdraw a student, parents must give the school written notice. All application, registration and tuition fees (please refer to our fee schedules) are non-refundable, as stated in the application and registration forms.

School Policies

Prohibited Practices

At Forest Hill Montessori School, we provide a kind and understanding atmosphere that involves helping children to develop self-control and self-direction skills. A balance of fairness, flexibility and firmness are necessary in achieving positive behaviour management. Children need to know that they can assert themselves safely in our environment. Children are disciplined in a positive manner at a level that is appropriate to their actions and their ages. Staff will discuss and explain the actions and discipline methods when appropriate. In summary:

We will **not** permit:

- corporal punishment

- physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;
- depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding; or
- inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Phasing-In of New Students

In order to facilitate a positive start to a new school, we do a phasing-in of all of our new students (except for Elementary students). We believe that this experience will create a peaceful and welcoming learning environment for our new students. Over a period of two weeks, we will introduce a few new students to the classroom every few days. During this phasing-in time, we warmly welcome a few of these new students to join their class, where they will find a smaller group of students. This transition time will allow new students to get comfortable in their new environment. In these smaller groups, the teacher can establish or re-establish a relationship with each child individually in an atmosphere of security and emotional comfort.

Arrival and Dismissal Times

Arrival for the school day is between **8:40 and 8:55 am**, unless a child is in one of our Extended Care Programs. Please ensure that your child is brought to school between 8:40 and 8:55 am. If you drop off your child before 8:40 am, they will be in our morning Extended Care Program, for which there is a fee. **Dismissal is at 3:45 pm**, unless your child is registered in our Afternoon Extended Care Program.

Morning Extended Care hours are from 7:45 to 8:40 am, and this program is provided for children whose parents have registered for this program. Afternoon Extended Care hours are from 3:45 to 6:00 pm. Occasional pre-arranged Extended Care is available and will be billed at the end of each calendar month. We do require 48 hours notice (via email or telephone call) for those parents wanting to use the Occasional Extended Care Program.

Extended Care Programs

Before and After School Care (Late Fees)

Our Extended Care Programs provide a relaxed, family-like environment for students. Indoor and outdoor activities include arts and crafts, cooking and snack preparation, board

games, puzzles, building sets, reading, playground sports and games are all part of this time spent together. Participation in Extended Care Programs is on a contractual basis only. Due to ratios and staffing, we cannot accept children on a drop-in or hourly basis, except in an emergency or on individual assessment. Please speak with the Office to discuss this as early as possible, preferably with at least 48 hours notice. Occasional use of our Extended Care Programs will be billed at the end of the month.

Late Fees

Students enrolled in our Morning Extended Care Program are welcome to come to school from 7:45 am and onward. For those of our students enrolled in our Afternoon Extended Care Program, service ends **promptly at 6:00 p.m.** – children may be picked up any time between 3:45 and 6:00 pm. For your child’s sense of security, and out of respect for our staff, it is essential that children be picked up on time. After 6:00 pm, a **\$5 per minute fee will be incurred and you will be invoiced at the end of the month.** Please plan your journey to school for pick-up accordingly.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Routines and Tips

Drop-off and pick-up are two of the most important times of the entire day. Here are a few insights that we have gathered over the years:

Drop-Off

- **Encourage your child to walk into school.** Avoid carrying your child. This will help give them a sense of independence and confidence. Have them carry their own lunch or backpack, which will help foster a sense of ownership and responsibility which children cherish.
- **We strongly recommend a quick drop-off.** This can be difficult at times. However, we find the longer a parent lingers, the harder the separation becomes. Lingering can create anxiety for both children and adults alike, and this is never a good start to a day. Instead, children need the reassurance that you have confidence in them and their day. That said, make sure you do say good-bye to them and let them know you are going. Sneaking away while they are busy or their attention is elsewhere may seem like an easy way to avoid tears, but it may cause them to mistrust you and become more clingy in the long run. A quick, positive and happy good-bye is always best.
- **Children benefit from consistency and routine.** Try to ensure they have a good sleep the night before school. If there is going to be a change in their day, inform your child, or send us a note so that we can do the same. The more we can do to help prepare them for what to expect, the more secure they will feel.
- **Arriving on time.** It is extremely important to arrive on time for a number of reasons. Most importantly, we do not want your child to feel left out, as they enter the classroom while everyone is already eagerly engaged in their daily activities. One of the best examples that we as adults can relate to is the feeling of walking into a meeting late. You feel disheveled and overwhelmed. You are not sure what

has already transpired and it is difficult to try and catch up.

Pick-Up

- **Prompt, timely and cheerful pick up.** Lengthy pick-ups can cause confusion, unease, restlessness and disrupt the other students in the classroom.
- **Greet your child respectfully.** Your child will be excited to see you after their school day, but meet their enthusiasm with a calm demeanor. Speak softly to them and encourage normal behaviour.
- **Provide your child with your full and undivided attention.** We recommend that you are not on the phone during this time, as it can be very disruptive for your child.
- **Arrive to pick up your child in a timely fashion.** Tardiness can cause anxiety for children. If you are running late, be sure to notify us, so we can inform your child. Children love to know what is going on, so they can prepare themselves. Additionally, if you need to pick your child up early for something, please let us know in advance, as this can be very disruptive for their day.
- **Ensure that you keep your child informed of any changes in their routine.** If there is a change, let them know, explain the situation and offer reassurance. It is often important that they hear this information from you.
- **Ask your child about their day.** Try asking them some open-ended questions, such as "What was your favourite part of your day?" Try to avoid judgments, praise and rewards.
- **Schedule an appointment with your child's teacher rather than speaking in front of them.** If you have comments, questions, or concerns about your child please be sure to schedule a separate time to meet with your child's teacher. Children are very aware of the conversations that take place in their presence, even if you think that they are not listening.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Elementary Campus

For arrivals, parents are asked to walk their child to the front doors of the school where they will be greeted by a teacher and escorted into the school each day.

For dismissal, parents wait outside the school doors for their child to be dismissed directly to them.

There is on-street parking directly in front of the school and there are a few spots at the back of the school for drop-off and pick-up times.

Junior Campus

For arrivals, parents will walk their child directly into the school and to their appropriate classroom or drop-off in the playground. Please check with your child's teacher about where their drop-off will be. There is on-street parking for 15 minutes at a time on Saranac

Blvd. To help ease congestion on the street and to encourage independence in our students we ask that you escort your child to their classroom cubby area and say a quick good-bye. During drop-off times, one of your child's classroom teachers will be in the cubby area encouraging students to take off their outerwear and change their footwear independently.

For dismissal, we ask you to follow the same procedures as arrivals and come to your child's classroom (unless otherwise instructed by your child's teacher), where the teacher will dismiss them to you.

Early Pick-Up

If a student must leave school early, a note, email or a telephone call from the student's parent/guardian is required indicating the time and reason for early dismissal. Students will not be dismissed before the end of the regular day without parental authorization.

Releasing Students

Should someone other than your child's usual caregiver be picking your child up from school on any given day, we require that you provide us with a signed note or an email, stating that person's name and granting your permission. If we are not familiar with the person who is picking up your child, we will ask them to provide us with identification (even if they are listed on the pick-up list). If you are arranging for your child to go home with another FHMS parent, please inform us of these plans ahead of time via phone or email.

Excessive Lateness and Absences

If your child is going to be absent from school on any given day due to illness or other reasons, please phone or email the school to let us know prior to 9:00 am.

Excessive lateness and absences have a negative impact on learning and can be disruptive to the classroom, especially in the Primary and Elementary Programs. School drop off is from 8:40 to 8:55 am so that all children can be in their classrooms by 9 am. Please email or call the office to let us know when your child will be late or absent. If we notice a pattern of excessive lateness or absences that are affecting a student or the classroom, we will ask those parents to meet with the Directors.

For children in our Afternoon Extended Care Program, there are late fees of \$5/minute for any pickups after 6:00 pm. Late pick up fees are still applicable during inclement weather. Parents are asked to ensure that they have a reliable back-up plan for their child.

Full-Day Program

If your child is four years of age or older we strongly recommend that you enrol them in our full-day program. It is beneficial to the child's experience to partake in a full-day of interaction and stimulating activity at this stage of their development.

The afternoons are a natural extension of the morning program, with more time allotted for special projects, excursions, experiments, group activities and more involved academic work. Children enjoy free play time outdoors, twice a day. It is important that you send your child to school appropriately dressed, as they will be spending time outdoors each day.

School Closures

In the event of an emergency or extremely inclement weather, classes at FHMS may be cancelled. We will make every effort to inform parents as early as possible through the office – a message will be sent out via email, Twitter and Facebook. Please also listen to the radio for weather announcements affecting the school's closure.

Parent Communication

Parents and teachers are truly partners and need to work together and communicate with one another in order to best meet the needs of each child.

To help maintain a steady flow of communication between parents and teachers, parent-teacher meetings are held twice a year. Both parents are encouraged to attend. We ask that you make childcare arrangements for your child on these occasions or check with the office to see if childcare is being offered. Please refer to the school calendar for specific dates.

Parents will receive a written progress report for their child at the end of every school year. Parent observation in the classroom is encouraged, as it allows you the unique opportunity to watch your child interacting and thriving in their school environment. Special times throughout the school year will be reserved to allow parents to schedule observations in their child's classroom.

Newsletters are sent home via email on a bi-weekly basis to keep parents informed and up to date on school happenings. Teachers will also send a monthly newsletter out via email to their students' parents.

Parents are encouraged to phone the school or schedule an appointment with teachers to discuss any matter or concern regarding their child. Parents are also welcome to email their child's teacher. Please note that teachers cannot take phone calls during class time, but will be more than happy to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak to you. Emails will be answered within 24 hours.

Individual conferences may be held at either the request of the parent or staff. If you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact your child's

classroom teacher first, then if necessary, the Principal.

FHMS Parents' Association

Our FHMS Parents' Association (PA) was formed to help promote continued community connection, communications between families and staff, and to help enrich the learning our children already do every day at FHMS. The FHMS PA works hard to coordinate and run several events throughout the school year such as our Chat and Chill get-togethers, Spring Fling, Family Apple Picking Day and the Wine and Cheese Night. These events help bring our school community together and raise funds for the school. They can be reached at pa@foresthillmontessorischool.com and are always looking for parents to volunteer their time to be part of their wonderful committee.

Special Events and Field Trips

We strive to provide opportunities for parents and families to become involved in our school community by planning and facilitating a number of special events throughout the school year that bring together all of our school families. These events include our Annual Corn Roast, Winter Market, Spring Picnic and other fun events.

At various points throughout the school year, we like to incorporate special events, field trips, and special guests to further enhance and enrich the children's enjoyment of their school experience. These events may include theme parties, theatrical performances, puppet shows, musical performances, science and nature exhibits and visits by special members of our community (e.g. police officers, firefighters, visiting nature programs, etc.). Some of these specially planned events are meant to take the place of off-site field trips for our younger students, who are not yet ready for such excursions. There may be extra fees for some of these events.

For our Elementary students, and Primary students, off-site excursions and field trips become a wonderful complement and extension to their classroom learning. Extra fees will be applicable for these trips.

Outdoor Education Program

Our Elementary students benefit greatly from our unique and innovative outdoor education program. This program is taught by our outdoor education specialist teacher and is aimed at helping our urban children become more connected and comfortable in nature. The focus is on building relationships between self, others and the environment; through the use of music, drama, storytelling, naturalist studies, stewardship, survival skills, outdoor adventures, games and play.

Yoga and Mindfulness

Our Yoga and Mindfulness Programs are an integral part of each child's experience here at FHMS. This is done through regular children's yoga classes and through classroom implementation of the Mind Up Curriculum. Yoga helps children see the beauty and light within themselves, thereby boosting their self-confidence, allowing them to feel more

comfortable with their bodies, and helping them get in touch with who they are inside. A child who learns yoga, mindfulness and relaxation will be developing essential skills for a lifetime of health and wellness in mind, body and spirit.

French

Our French Specialist teacher delivers an engaging and rigorous French Program to our full-day Pre-Primary, Primary and Elementary classes. Our youngest students learn French as a second language through vocabulary enrichments, songs, poetry and conversational French, while our Elementary students participate in a more advanced and challenging French program in oral and written communication based on their unique needs and levels.

Music, Drama and Art

At FHMS, we strive to provide our students with a well-balanced education in the arts. Music is a daily part of the children's experience, enjoyed during circle time, listening centres, music and movement, and through our unique Montessori music curriculum. Our Elementary students take part in a vocal music program through our FHMS Choir.

Art is infused into every area of our integrated curriculum. Children gain exposure and experience with a variety of different artistic mediums and develop an awareness of technique, art appreciation and the joy of creating. Additionally, full-day Primary and Elementary students have an art enrichment class with our Arts Resource Specialist each week.

Drama education is something our Primary and Elementary students take part in regularly throughout the school year. Our Elementary students collaborate, rehearse and work diligently towards putting on a wonderful end of year play that our whole school community enjoys and eagerly anticipates.

After School Clubs

Our school offers a number of exciting after school clubs for our students to take part in throughout the school year. A few examples of the variety of extra-curricular activities available to our students after school include Art Club, Baking Club, Photography Club, Mad Science Club, Soccer Club, Jewelry Making Club, Mandarin Club and Dance Club. There is truly something for everyone. Some clubs will have a nominal fee to cover the cost of materials.

Specialized Services

At Forest Hill Montessori School, we strive to help all of our students reach their fullest potential and ensure they are meeting all of their developmental milestones. Through regular observation in classrooms, all of our staff members will be aware of any changes in behaviour or if any student is in need of extra support. If this is the case, we will arrange a meeting with the parents and discuss our observations and offer guidelines and

community resources for extra support, such as a community social worker or CCAC (Community Care Access Centre), which may be needed. If parents have any questions or concerns about their child's progress or development, we would be happy to arrange a meeting and discuss these concerns. All Forest Hill Montessori School students have individual program plans.

Allergies and Anaphylaxis Policy

Please inform the office of ANY allergies your child has. Your child's profile/information sheet has an area for allergies to identify this information.

While we strive to take every effort to reduce risk of exposure, Forest Hill Montessori School does not purport to be, nor can it be deemed to be free of food items and non-food items that may lead to a severe allergic or anaphylactic reaction. We will make every reasonable effort to reduce the risk to children with severe allergies or anaphylaxis in accordance with this policy.

We also realize the importance of identification of all anaphylactic children. We have this Policy in place to help ensure that the children in our school are safe at all times. While it is impossible to create a risk-free environment, we take the following important steps to minimize potentially fatal anaphylactic reactions.

- The parent/guardian of the child will **communicate to us and inform** us of the child's anaphylactic allergy when placing their child's name on the Waiting List. Prior to enrolment, the family will provide us with an allergy information sheet and an **Individual Plan** with input from both a parent *and the child's physician*. Please include very detailed emergency procedures.
- **ALL staff/students/volunteers must be trained on the procedures of each Individual Plan and the use of an Epi-pen. A form will be signed and dated by all staff who were trained.** A review will be done *annually* for all staff.
- All anaphylactic children are identified to the staff verbally and the anaphylactic child's Individual Plan will be reviewed with Forest Hill Montessori School staff prior to the child's first day to discuss what steps will be taken to maintain the child's safety.
- Any and all volunteers and students who will be providing temporary care for or supervision of children at FHMS will review this policy and all individual plans of children with anaphylaxis before they begin to providing care for the child.
- Upon entry to Forest Hill Montessori School, the child's parent/guardian will provide us with a recent photo of their child. This photo and anaphylactic/allergy information will be posted on the allergy list. This identification method is used for all children having a serious allergy or medical condition.
- The parents will also provide us with two Epi-Pens prior to enrolment. One Epi-Pen will be stored in the First Aid Kit that will go outside with the child(ren), while the other one will be kept in the classroom, in an area that is unobtainable by children. Consent by the child's physician is required for any children carrying their own Epi-pen.

- If need be, other families in the school may be provided with information regarding specific allergies and what steps can be taken to support a safe environment.

Strategies to Reduce the Risk of Exposure

Our staff will also take reasonable steps to create a safe program room by:

- monitoring food brought into school
- disinfecting of tables before & after eating
- having children with severe allergies eat lunch at separate tables and/or away from others
- effective and proper hand washing
- not providing the allergic item
- other measures as dictated by the allergy plan signed by the parent
- staff are required to be trained on Epi-Pen usage and anaphylactic reactions during their First Aid/CPR recertification

Emergency Procedures

- follow emergency procedures as outlined in the child's individual plan
- administer the Epi-Pen and stay with the child
- get someone to get the second Epi-Pen as a precaution
- one person calls for help **(911)**
- have the child transported to the hospital even if the symptoms have subsided, as symptoms may occur hours after exposure to an allergen
- the person who administered the Epi-Pen should go to the hospital with the child

Nut-Aware School

Peanut/nut products are a common fatal allergen for many individuals. Even the residue of nut oil left on furniture or utensils can cause a life-threatening reaction. As a result, Forest Hill Montessori School strives diligently to be a **nut-aware school. No nuts of any kind or any products containing traces of peanuts or tree-nuts are to be brought to school.** We endeavor to help our students who have these allergies by insisting families not send in any food into the classrooms for sharing.

When preparing your child's packed lunches, please do not send anything that is made with peanuts or tree-nut products. Please keep in mind that products that have a "may contain nuts" label, or anything that may have come into contact with nuts may not be brought into the school. We do ask all of our families to check labels carefully. We also require that snacks in packed lunches be sent to school in their original packaging. While we cannot guarantee a completely nut-free environment, the precautions that we take, along with your cooperation, will help make FHMS as safe as possible.

Due to life-threatening allergies and Forest Hill Montessori School's belief that students should be encouraged to eat healthy foods as often as possible, we ask that you **refrain from sending in any foods for birthdays.** While we appreciate the time and talent involved in home baking, please do not send in homemade goods.

Lunches and Snacks

The school provides healthy and delicious snacks twice daily, once in the morning and again in the afternoon for all of our students. We work with a wonderful catering company – Real Food for Real Kids – a Toronto-based company that provides our school with delicious and nutritious hot lunches and snacks that exceed the requirements of the Child Care and Early Learning Years Act (CCEYA) and the City of Toronto Children's Services Operating Criteria. RFRK maintains a peanut and tree-nut free environment. They also require all of their suppliers to ensure that the ingredients or products they provide us are peanut and tree-nut free. Children's allergies and food restrictions are always taken into account when snacks and lunches are served. Children in our Toddler and Pre-Primary Programs have a hot lunch included in their fees.

Children in our full-day Primary and Elementary programs have the option of taking part in our catered lunch program for an additional fee or they may bring their own nut-free lunch from home.

All packed-lunch containers and lunch bags must be labeled with your child's name and must be of a sort that keeps a child's food appropriately hot or cold and maximizes freshness and prevents contamination, as we are not able to put lunches in the refrigerator or heat them up. We also ask that parents provide litter-less lunches (all litter will be sent home every day), by using reusable containers. We also strongly encourage healthy lunch options, in accordance with Canada's Food Guide. See our school bulletin boards for ideas.

Health and Illness Policies

The health and safety of all of our FHMS students is a priority. **If a child looks or feels unwell, has diarrhea, vomiting or has a fever (38 C or higher), please keep them home! Students need to be free of fever, diarrhea, vomiting or signs of illness for at least 24 hours before they may return to school.** A fever indicates that your child is most likely fighting an infection and that they need to rest. Children need to stay home when they are sick in order to get rest and to get better, and to also ensure the health and wellbeing of other students and our staff. *Do not send a sick child to school.* Also, if you feel that your child is not well enough to go out for recess, please keep them home. We would also ask that you please keep your child home if he/she has:

- **a fever.** Please do not bring your child back to school until his or her temperature is normal and he/she has been fever-free, without the aid of medication, for at least 24 hours.
- **an ear infection.** Please do not bring your child back to school until they have been on antibiotics for a minimum of 24 hours and are not requiring any pain relief medication.
- **rashes or discharges from the nose or eyes.** Please get a doctor's note stating that your child has been given the okay to come to school.

- **a runny nose that is not clear.** If your child has discharge from their nose that is not clear, we do ask that you keep them home. Yellow or green discharge may indicate an infection.
- **a stomachache.** If your child has a stomachache, keep your child at home until they regain their appetite and have normal bowel movements.
- **vomiting/diarrhea.** Your child may return to school when he/she has ***not vomited or had diarrhea for at least 24 hours.***
- **lice.** Head lice, or the medical condition known as pediculosis, is not a reportable disease, nor is it an illness and is a common part of a child's life. It is more appropriately defined as a social nuisance, not a health problem. If we find a case of head lice at school, we will ask that the parent/caregiver come and pick up their child. Please ensure that the appropriate treatment is used and that your child is free of lice before coming back to school. Periodic head checks are encouraged as a precaution.

If your child becomes ill during the course of his/her school day and must be removed from their class, a parent or someone on your pickup list will be contacted and required to come pick up your child immediately. **If your child is infected with a contagious disease (i.e. chicken pox, measles, hand, foot and mouth disease), please notify the school right away.**

Also, please let us know if there are any changes in your child's ongoing health.

Medication

Forest Hill Montessori School staff will only administer **prescription medication when a parent fills out a Medication Authorization Form.** Non-prescription medicine will be administered only to children with anaphylaxis or other life threatening conditions, when it has been recommended in writing by your doctor and you have signed the appropriate form. Any changes in medication or medication instructions must be provided in writing, again using the appropriate form. This form must include a schedule that sets out the times the medication is to be administered and the exact amounts to be administered.

1. Forest Hill Montessori School will administer only prescription medication when it is required during program hours and only with written parental consent.
2. A physician must prescribe all medication.
3. Medication will only be administered to a child from the original container as supplied by a pharmacist or the original package, with a Pharmacist's label on it. The container must be clearly labeled with the child's name, name of medication, the dosage, the date of purchase and expiration (if applicable), and instruction for storage and administration.
4. Parents must complete and sign a *Medication Authorization* form indicating the times the medication is to be given, as well as the dosage.
5. All medication will be stored in a locked area in the school office, unless it is an Epi-pen or an inhaler that is needed in case of emergency. Such medications will be stored

in the classroom in the First Aid Kit, in a location unobtainable by children, unless this medication needs to be carried by the child in accordance with a parent's and doctor's instructions. Should the medication be required in the evening, it is the parent's responsibility to take it home at the end of the day. We suggest you request that your pharmacist split the medication into two bottles (one for home and one for school), to ensure the necessary medication is always on hand.

6. In the case that a medication needs to be refrigerated, this medication will be stored where it is unobtainable by children in a locked fridge box.
7. Any non-prescription medication **MUST** be accompanied by a doctor's note with very clear directions (reason for needing the non-prescription medication, name of medication, amounts to be given, times to administer the medication and any possible side-effects). Over the counter medications include Tylenol, Alerius, Benadryl, throat lozenges, and eye-drops and will only be administered after we receive signed and written consent by a doctor. For a child with an ongoing medication need (e.g., asthma puffers), **a letter from the child's physician stating the name of medication with detailed instructions signed by the *physician and parent* must be provided.**

Immunizations

All children must have their current immunizations (as recommended by the local medical officer of health) and a copy of these records on file. This does not apply where a parent of the child objects in writing to the immunization on the grounds that the immunization conflicts with the sincerely held convictions of the parent's religion or conscience or a legally qualified medical practitioner gives medical reasons in writing to the operator as to why the child should not be immunized. Parents who are not immunizing their child(ren) must provide a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief Affidavit prior to starting school. No student will be able to start school without these forms on file. If any infectious disease appears at school, an unimmunized child, staff, student or volunteer may have to stay out of school until the outbreak is declared over to minimize the risk of spreading the disease.

Holidays and Birthdays

Forest Hill Montessori School is a non-sectarian school. As Montessori includes the study of many diverse cultures and religious events, these celebrations are dealt with from a historical and cultural perspective.

For your child's birthday we mark the occasion with a simple celebration that symbolizes your child's life and accomplishments. On the day of your child's birthday (or thereabouts), the teachers and children in the class will celebrate together with a Sun Celebration. A photo of the event will be sent home or emailed to parents. Parents are invited to bring in a plant or flowers or to donate a special book for the classroom library in honour of their child's birthday. Choosing such a birthday present and presenting it allows the child the pleasure of contributing to the school in a way that everyone can enjoy. Due to life-threatening allergies and Forest Hill Montessori School's belief that students should be

encouraged to eat healthy foods as often as possible, we ask that you **refrain from sending in any foods**. Please refer to our Nut-Safe School section.

If you are planning a birthday party for your child and are inviting school friends to the event, please hand out party invitations outside of school (i.e. after school or by email) or discreetly give them to your child's teacher to distribute. We do make class lists of parents' emails available to our parents – just send us an email asking for this. This will help to avoid the hurt feelings of those children who are not invited. We also ask that parents refrain from inviting teachers/staff members to your child's parties.

Student Teachers and Volunteers

Every year, FHMS welcomes student teachers from the Foundation for Montessori Education or the Toronto Montessori Institute. Their contribution to the classroom experience is greatly appreciated and valued. Our volunteers and students (18 years of age and over) are always supervised by employees of FHMS and they are never included in the child to adult/teacher ratios.

Accidents

Forest Hill Montessori School works to prevent student injuries by carefully selecting all activities and monitoring students. Thoughtful care and attention will be provided for any student injured during school hours. This includes the administration of first aid, contacting 911 if warranted, and informing the parent(s). Every attempt will be made to notify parents at home or work for any child receiving a head injury or other serious injuries requiring further medical attention.

All accidents during school hours are reported to the office, logged and kept on file. A copy of the accident log/report form will be sent home as well. The Administrative Staff will review accident reports to ensure appropriate preventative measures were in place and the follow up has been handled correctly. Parents with questions about any incident leading to injury are encouraged to contact the Principal.

Fire Drills

As part of our commitment to safety, Forest Hill Montessori School has a detailed plan for fire procedures. We practice fire drills on a monthly basis. Parents in the building during either event are asked to follow staff directions.

Recess, Outdoor Activities and Physical Education

Outdoor activities and Physical Education classes are viewed as an important part of the school day, and all students are expected to participate outdoors. At Forest Hill Montessori School, we provide an excellent ratio of adult to student supervision and carefully prepared areas for these activities. Ratios as set out by the Ministry of Education are the same ratios maintained during regular classroom time. Below are a few points and safety guidelines of which we would like to make you aware:

- Students must have appropriate footwear, outerwear and accessories for the day's weather conditions and activities taking place outdoors. Crocs, flip-flops and some sandals are not safe for outdoor recess. Children will be running and climbing during recess and outdoor activities. Please ensure that Full-Day students are wearing suitable shoes.
- Full-Day Toddler, Pre-Primary and Primary Program students go outside every day, weather permitting, for a total of two hours per day. Please check the weather forecast before sending your child to school and dress them appropriately.
- Any student who is too ill to go outside for recess or Physical Education should be considered too ill to attend school. Please keep them home until they are feeling better.
- Students will not go outside in extremely inclement weather. During the winter, we will keep children inside if the temperature reaches – 10 C or colder with wind chill for our Toddler Program students; – 15 C or colder with wind chill for our Pre-Primary and Primary Program students; and – 20 C or colder with wind chill for our Elementary Program students.

Our teachers regularly counsel and advise their students in advance with regard to safe and respectful play at recess and will follow up if/when issues arise. All faculty and staff members on recess supervision duty supervise vigilantly in order to ensure the safety of each student. Your child's safety is of utmost importance to us.

Clothing

Your child should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the weather. We ask that a second set of clothing be kept at school in case of accidents. We require that you send in an extra set/pair of:

- undergarments
- socks
- shirt
- long pants/shorts
- indoor shoes that will be left at the school

All clothing *must* be labeled with your child's name. We highly recommend using Mabel's Labels. Please label all underwear, socks, t-shirt and shoes. For full-day students, please ensure that your child comes to school in appropriate footwear for outdoor playtime. For safety reasons, we highly recommend a shoe that is secure and stable. For children who will be napping, a small pillow, blanket and soft toy (if desired) should be left at school in a labeled bag. For Toddlers, disposable diapers and wipes (also labeled) are to be provided by parents.

PD Days

Professional Development (PD) days are designated for our teachers and administrators to attend conferences, workshops and various school meetings. Our schools will be closed and classes do not run on these days. Please make alternate arrangements for your child.

School Calendar and Holidays

The new school calendar is published and distributed to parents towards the middle of July. Please keep your calendar handy for reference. Events will be posted on our website at www.foresthillmontessorischool.com/events and are also available through the office. Please note that FHMS will **not be open on Statutory Holidays** that are observed in Ontario and Canada (New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Boxing Day). We are also closed for two and a half weeks during the Winter Holiday season (usually the last two and half weeks of late December and early January) as well as two weeks during March for Spring Break.

Parking

In the interest of student and staff safety, we kindly ask you to strictly adhere to our parking policies. We would also ask you to possibly consider walking, cycling, car-pooling or using public transportation when appropriate and possible.

For all of our parents, please follow the signed on-street parking rules and restricted times. There is also a car park at the back of the Elementary Campus that you may use briefly during drop-off and pick-up times. Please use extreme caution when entering and exiting the parking lot.

Summer Programs

We offer a fun and creative Summer Camp Program in July and August. Please check our website or the office for more details.

Photo Day

We schedule one day for individual and class photos during the first two weeks of May. More information will be sent out closer to the date.

Contacting the School

At Forest Hill Montessori School, we value your comments, feedback and opinions. Please feel free to get in touch any time with any questions or concerns that you may have. Please use this guide to ensure that your questions or comments are directed to the appropriate office/staff/teacher. We are always here to help!

We are so happy to have you as part of our FHMS family and we wish you all a wonderful school year

Forest Hill Montessori School Parent Handbook Agreement Form*

I, _____, have reviewed the
(print name)
Parent Handbook. In doing so, I acknowledge and agree to abide by the policies contained therein and will also agree that my child(ren) will comply with the policies which apply to students.

Signature

Date

***Please sign this form and return to office by your child's first day of school**