



2020-2021 Parent Handbook





Welcome to Otter Learning family of schools!

We are a best-in-class early childhood education school focused on social and academic success. Our mission is to make students happy and parents feel confident in their child's future.

Our educational philosophy centers around establishing an innovative “learning playground” where children find undiscovered passions, develop important life-skills, make new friends, and expand their imaginations. We understand that all children have different interests, abilities, and learning styles, so our approach to education considers each child’s individuality.

We strive to offer our students a whole-life experience that goes beyond the classroom. Our schools offer a compelling learning environment filled with activities that are both challenging and fun. It is our belief that a quality education encompasses a broad spectrum of opportunities both in and out of the classroom.

We recognize that choosing a preschool / childcare program is an extremely important decision for both you and your child. We are thankful that you have come to see us and strongly feel that you have made the right choice.

Our staff is what really makes the difference. They consist of experienced certified and continually trained educators. We will care for your child like no other institution. All teachers and staff are required to meet or exceed all childcare licensing requirements including 45 hours of childcare training and thorough state and federal background checks. We recognize that quality staff members make a good program GREAT and we are committed to continuously improving the service we provide to your family!

This Parent Handbook provides an overview of the program, which policies and procedures to expect when enrolled at our school and other relevant information pertinent to school operations. We ask that you please take time to read this handbook and ask the administration any questions as they arise.

We are excited to welcome you and your student to the Otter Learning family!

Sincerely,

Your Otter Learning Team



Our Philosophy

“Children First, Family-Certified, Every Day”

Why Otters?

The Otter is a smart and engaging animal, overflowing with positive energy. They are positive, eminently lovable and display highly developed social skills. Otters mix easily with a diverse range of personalities.

We think the same should be true of children.

Our Mission & History

Otter Learning was established to provide more than a “daycare” for children and seeks to offer children an opportunity to develop skills early in life that will prepare them to become global citizens. We are committed to providing children and their families the highest quality environment to prepare them for the 21st Century.

Our goal is for each student to discover incredible adventures on their way to becoming responsible, respectful citizens of the community. We understand that all children have different interests, abilities, and learning styles, so our approach to education considers each child’s individuality. Our teachers are trained to help children develop emotional skills, encourage engagement and promote individual curiosity. We are result-oriented and focused on ensuring all children are properly prepared for their next phase in their social development.

Our state-of-the-art facilities are staffed by experienced, dedicated individuals, teachers and tireless support staff, who foster a love of learning and exploring in every child. Their goal is to ensure your child’s well-being and guide them on their educational journey every day.

Each of our schools is licensed by the state where it operates. In addition, each school adheres to the highest standards of safety, security, cleanliness, teaching, and care. Every Otter Learning school operates the way any good neighborhood business does. We know our community and we understand how best to serve the parents and children who live there.

As a leader in early education, we are committed to fulfilling our mission with honesty, trust, excellence, and the same passion for learning we instill in our students.



Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook was developed to answer many of the commonly asked questions that children and families may have during the school year. The handbook contains information about child privileges and responsibilities as well as parent and guardian responsibilities. Therefore, families and children are responsible for knowing its contents. Please take the time to become familiar with the handbook and keep it accessible for your use. It can be a valuable reference during the school year and a means to avoid confusion and misunderstandings when questions arise.

The school reserves the right to interpret or change the content of the handbook, including the rules and regulations governing the conduct of students and parents. This handbook is not a contract, nor is it intended to be construed as such. Our school's reserve the right to modify and/or amend the content of this handbook at any time during the year as we deem appropriate or necessary.

If you have any questions about the handbook or any of its policies, please contact the Director via Brightwheel or email.

Equal Opportunity

Otter Learning schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, citizenship, handicap or disability or any other legally protected status in regard to admissions or in the administration of its educational policies and administered programs.

This school makes its programs and services accessible to individuals with disabilities. The school welcomes requests for accommodation. The school will attempt to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified students with mental or physical disabilities, to the extent that such a request does not cause a fundamental alteration to the School's programs/curriculum and to the extent that it does not create an undue hardship for the school's daily operations.

The first step in requesting an accommodation is to provide the Director with documentation of the condition from a qualified professional, such as a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist. Upon receipt of such documentation and recommendations, we will communicate with the family in an interactive process to obtain additional information or discuss the circumstances related to the request.

Communication

We welcome family input and encourage you to visit your child's classroom and speak with your child's teacher. We have an open-door policy at our school and families are encouraged to get involved in their child's classroom.

All Otter Learning schools are powered by Brightwheel, the leading early education platform which helps transform the childcare experience. Brightwheel allows our staff and administration to provide daily updates, photos, videos, curriculum, feeding schedules, secure check in/out and online tuition payments.

All parent teacher communication must be transmitted in Brightwheel or in-person. Verbal messages from children on behalf of parents will not be tolerated and correspondence to staff's personal cell phones will not be accepted as a means of communication.

On a regular basis, please check your child's Brightwheel account and be sure to read any electronic correspondences that are sent through the app or distributed physically at the front desk. Also, be sure to check your child's cubby box and classroom folder daily for messages, daily reports and classwork.

Role of Families or Other Caregivers: Our General Expectations of You

The relationship between families and staff is vital to the success of a child's experience. A partnership must be formed the first day, with open communication and understanding that the development and the growth of the child is our top priority.

Families can assist and help ensure a smooth transition by adhering to the following:

- Sign children in and out at the front desk and then escort them to their designated class
- Supervise your children at all times while escorting them inside the school and in the parking area
- Drive safely through the parking area
- Complete and update forms, as needed, when changes occur (i.e., new phone number, address, etc.)
- Keep staff informed of special needs or changes that might affect your child's behavior
- Notify the school if your child is ill, absent or tardy
- Ensure tuition payments are made on time
- Notify the school if you will be later than usual picking up your child
- Provide two changes of clothes and undergarments marked with your child's name. This request is for all ages. Our school is not responsible for the lost clothing. Please change clothing seasonally to accommodate the changes in weather and the growth of your child
- Ensure child is dressed properly for weather and play
- Do not allow children to bring in toys. (This rule does not include special transition toys such as a blanket or other security items to which your child is significantly attached). The school will not be responsible for any lost or damaged toys
- Participate in the school's special activities
- Attend scheduled family meetings and conferences

Family-Teacher Conferences

Parent teacher conferences may be scheduled throughout the year. Families are encouraged to participate on the pre-specified days. However, family/teacher conferences may be scheduled any time during the school year at the request of the family or teacher. Arrangements should be made directly with the Director.

Concerns with Your Child's Classroom or Teacher

We encourage you to speak directly with the teacher. Our preference is for teachers and families to keep an open line of communication and work together to solve issues. If you are unable to resolve your concern, please speak to the Director.

Classroom Experience

Curriculum:

Educational priorities are well-defined at our schools. Our comprehensive curriculum materials are designed specifically for each stage of development. Our curriculum establishes a solid foundation for educational growth beginning with a child's first day. Each of our curriculum programs is research-based and includes developmentally appropriate activities. We continue to educate children through the preschool years and beyond with theme based, academically stimulating, hands-on units. We provide teachers with the curriculum materials they need to create a positive learning environment that will challenge children and move them toward mastering new skills.

Infants:

Infants do can do more than eat and sleep, and play. Behind these misleadingly simplistic actions, occurs an awe-inspiring process of development through which infants make sense of and learn how to interact with the world around them. The possibilities for enhancing children is limitless.

At the youngest stage of development, infants begin to observe their environment. Babies enjoy being held, cuddled and nurtured by our loving staff. Our infants engage in several stimulating activities throughout the day that are catered towards their own developmental progress such as discovery of the five senses, exploring textures, colors and learning a variety of words and sounds.

The next stage of development includes patterns of eating, being alert and sleeping which are clearly regulated. Our babies are introduced to new foods, sitting up, recognizing their name, crawling and pulling up, and exploring their environment. Our trained and dedicated staff delicately work with our parents to aid children through the different stages of development. Parents and/or guardians will always be part of each room transition decision and will receive daily Brightwheel updates and reports to track progress.

Toddlers:

Many exciting developmental milestones occur in our toddler classrooms. The children are reading picture books, drawing, painting, climbing, jumping, and exploring everything around them. We believe that a toddler's environment should offer age-related appropriate activities and the opportunity to interact and play alone or in small groups. By allowing our children to learn in small groups, it gives



them the opportunity to get more one-on-one attention. Our professionally trained teachers will give you the peace of mind knowing that your child is in a loving and nurturing atmosphere.

During the toddler years, children make steady gains in all areas of development. They are struggling with their feelings of independence versus dependence. They want to do everything by themselves, yet they also realize that they need love and attention to accomplish these goals.

We offer a program to meet the busy lifestyle of your toddler. We provide a variety of techniques to help your child move toward independence, problem solving, understanding abstract concepts, and sharing with other children. We focus on appropriate developmental outcomes that are based on your child's individual needs. Reading, sorting, counting, and identifying shapes are a primary objective for improving your child's language skills and are all covered in-depth.

We recognize that physical separation from toddler and family is always difficult. Our school strives to help families and children experience a calm transition of physical and emotional separation through our safe and loving environment. We encourage families to take the time they need to make this separation as smooth as possible and to let us know how we can support in the process.

Preschool:

Preschool children are very inquisitive, and their confidence is growing daily. Because preschoolers are eager to learn, they need the opportunity to develop in an environment that is based upon their unique development and learning styles. This type of learning is referred to as "Developmentally Appropriate Practices." Our preschool program is based on this very important concept and considers each child's strengths, interests, and needs. The curriculum is designed to challenge our preschoolers including hands-on math, science, art, music, cooking and physical fitness activities, this well-rounded program offers something for each child. Fine motor skills are an important part of the learning process as children are introduced to basic printing. We also focus on successfully completing potty training in this age cohort to establish routine and good habits early on.

Pre-Kindergarten:

This classroom is truly designed to do just what the name suggests: prepare your child for kindergarten. Children are expected to know more than ever these days. We provide a school-like setting, enhanced with a balance of activities geared to encourage and promote children to be the best they can be.

Your child will be given the time and attention required to provide a solid foundation for a lifetime of continued learning. Our teachers use their experience and training to ensure that each child's day is balanced with creative activities that help to develop thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Pre-K students are assessed with an ongoing customized program and enjoy the benefits of oversight by our Pre-K specialists. Students cruise way past typical kindergarten entrance requirements, mastering language and math concepts well into elementary school levels. You will be amazed by what can be accomplished during this special year. In addition, the use of a daily schedule helps children feel secure and independent as they anticipate activities and the opportunity of making choices on an individual basis.



Kindergarten through 12 years:

High quality before and after school care can benefit your child in elementary school and long afterward. Research indicates that effective after school care programs can improve school attendance, classroom behavior, and academic aspirations. These characteristics can bolster academic success through high school and well into college. Spending time in after school programs also lays the foundation for healthy lifestyles. When children are surrounded by opportunities to make good choices in positive and supportive environments, they're more likely to make better choices for the rest of their lives. As part of our after school program, students will have access to individual tutors for homework assistance and educational enrichment, exciting field trips during planned school closures and summer break, healthy snacks, large indoor and outdoor play spaces with fun and engaging games and transportation to and from our partner schools. Families are welcome to make alternative transportation plans as necessary.

Extracurricular Activities:

Our school offers a variety of extracurricular activities including dance, art classes, soccer and other exciting seasonal activities. Please speak with the Director to receive more detailed information regarding the available programming and associated prices.

Enrollment Process

Families are encouraged to have their children with them the first time they visit or tour the school. It is important that the child and parents feel comfortable with our staff and the facility.

To reserve space in our program, parents must submit a completed application as well as submit a **non-refundable registration fee due at the time of enrollment**. Amounts of all fees are found on the school's fee schedule.

All children must be observed by the school prior to admission to assure that our program can effectively meet their needs.

Your First Day

On your child's first day of school the following forms must be completed, signed and reviewed by the administrative staff:

- Enrollment Application
- Immunization Report and Physical
- Health and Emergency Form
- Emergency Information Card
- School Transportation Form (if applicable)
- Acknowledgement of Receipt of Parent Handbook and
- Acknowledgement of **ALL** Forms Found in the Parent Handbook

No child may continue enrollment for more than 30 days without a current immunization report. Please let the administrative staff know of any allergies or special dietary requirements prior to your child's first day. Please also see the school's *Medication Policy* detailed further in this handbook.



If the information in these forms change during the child's enrollment, families are responsible for notifying the administration in writing of the changes. This includes, but is not limited to, phone numbers, emergency contacts, work locations, or child's physician.

If a family decides to unenroll for any particular reason, and the family has an outstanding balance or does not abide by the two-week unenrollment notice, all past due tuition and fees will need to be paid in full prior to re-enrollment.

The administration reserves the right to revoke acceptance or to dismiss a child at any time. The administration also reserves the right to place children in a classroom, to determine the teachers for a particular classroom and to determine whether a particular child continues to meet the school's requirements.



Tuition Policy

Tuition Payments:

Tuition payments should be viewed as an annual school year obligation which is paid by families weekly or monthly depending on your desired payment plan. There are no deductions for absence due to illness, accident, holidays, teacher workdays, days the school is closed for inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances. If our school must unexpectedly close due to unexpected circumstances, such as inclement weather, full payment of tuition is required. We reserve the right to close any additional days needed and full tuition payment is expected to be paid in full.

Our philosophy behind this policy stems from our goal to be able to support the school day-to-day (pay our highly trained teachers, purchase supplies, ensure safety of building and facilities) and provide the necessary resources for the school.

Tuition payments are due every Monday for that week of service for weekly plans or the first of each month for monthly billing plans. If tuition is not paid in full by Monday at close of business, a late fee will be charged. Students with late fees outstanding past Tuesday evening will not be allowed to return to the school until the balance is paid in full. We understand the commitment of sending your child to school, but we also have an obligation to ensuring our teachers are compensated for all the work they do when services are rendered.

If you do decide to unenroll in order to avoid paying tuition for a few weeks, the school will require a registration fee upon re-enrollment and cannot guarantee that your child's space will be available upon return due to waitlist demand.

When a child has transitioned full time into an older classroom, the new tuition rate corresponding to that classroom will become effective on the first Monday. This rate change will be based on classroom advancement, not by date of birth.

We reserve the right to change tuition and/or program fees due to unforeseen increases in expenses. Families will be notified of any changes in tuition within four weeks of the change. Any additional services such as late pick-up, field trips, etc. must be paid the same day the services are rendered.

No portion of your weekly paid outstanding tuition will be refunded or canceled in the event of absence, withdrawal or dismissal from the school or school closure. Should it become necessary to withdraw your child for any reason, a two-week written notice must be given to the administration. If the notice ends on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, tuition for the entire week is due. We reserve the right to dismiss any student at the discretion of the school's director or administration.

Payment Method / Brightwheel:

All tuition must be paid electronically via the school's Brightwheel application. **The school does not accept checks or cash as a form of payment.** This policy helps create a safer environment for staff and allows our teachers and administration to spend more time with students and families.

Brightwheel accepts all major credit and debit cards. In addition, families have the option to link a bank account to automatically draft tuition payments each week for convenience. Brightwheel charges a small software fee for each transaction and we recommend families link their bank information to lower the charge to \$0.50 per transaction



Registration & Supplies Fees:

A non-refundable registration fee is due after the student has been officially accepted based on admission requirements. This fee is due upon notification of the child's acceptance and prior to beginning the program. This fee is an annual fee and must be paid on the anniversary date of your enrollment. These fees serve to ensure your child's placement in addition to covering the costs of processing the application for admission, supplies and educational materials. If space is not available at the time of registration, your child will be placed on our waiting list. We will contact you when space becomes available. Registration fees guarantee that your child's spot will be reserved for up to 2 weeks. The school also charges a one-time supplies fee each September to ensure adequate supplies and materials are procured for each student.

School Ager / After School Fees:

Tuition for school age children and before/after school care is due each week regardless of attendance. The school reserves and guarantees student's spots on our transportation vehicles and therefore tuition is due each week due to high demand and limited space. However, school age tuition is not due when local public schools are closed when we are not picking up at local partner schools (example: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Spring Break). If school age students attend the school during the weeks of public-school closure, the school age daily rate tuition will be applied to your statement balance. School age children are not eligible for vacation discounts per the below policy.

Vacation:

When full time students have been enrolled for six consecutive months, you may take 2 weeks of vacation at 50% off per week. No vacation discounts are permitted before six months of enrollment. The 50% of your child's tuition must be paid before you leave for vacation or you will not qualify for the discount. Vacation is only permitted for full weeks and cannot be broken up into days. Vacation time will only be approved and credited to accounts that are current. Vacation weeks do not accumulate and will not carry over from year to year, (a year is based on an enrollment year). Requests for vacation time must be communicated through Brightwheel request or email to the Director at least two weeks in advance. If you have not been in attendance for at least six months and choose to unenroll, you will potentially forfeit your space and will have to re-enroll and repay your registration fee upon your return. School age children are not eligible for vacation discounts.

Discounts:

We offer sibling discounts of 10% discount to the oldest child for a family of two and a 10% discount off for each additional child within the same family. We also offer military discounts of 5% off total tuition with a current valid I.D. Discounts may not be combined with any other discounts, offers, or promotions.

Late Fees:

Tuition payments are due every Monday for that week of service for weekly plans or the first of each month for monthly billing plans. If tuition is not paid in full by Monday at close of business, a \$10 late fee will be charged. Students with late fees outstanding past Tuesday evening will not be allowed to return to the school until the balance is paid in full. Failure to remain current on tuition payments may result in dismissal from the school.



Tuition Suspension:

During the School Year: No suspension of tuition will be given to any families for time out during the school year, August through May.

During Summer Break: Suspension is available for periods of planned absence of more than two weeks. We require a two-week notice, tuition and accounts must be current before suspension can be activated. When suspension is used, one week's tuition is required to keep your account active. This tuition will go toward your child's first week back from suspension. A return date must be given prior to leaving.

Withdrawal:

Families are responsible for initiating the child withdrawal process. A two-week notice is required, and tuition is expected to be paid in full for those weeks. If a two-week notice is not submitted, tuition is still due for those two weeks. Families will need to speak to the Director who will start the required paperwork process for withdrawal. Once the withdrawal form is properly completed and signed, the family must ensure that any school property in the possession of the child or child's family is returned and any outstanding financial obligations are met.

Dismissals

The staff will work with each child to meet the needs of that child and every effort will be made to provide a positive learning experience.

However, the administration reserves the right to ask families to make alternative arrangements for care if it is determined that a child's needs cannot be met, or the child has not adjusted to group care provided by the school. In the event behavior becomes disruptive to the program or poses an unsafe situation for the child or other children in the School, alternative arrangements may be required.

A dismissal will only be considered after careful consideration. If the administration determines that the program is not a successful match, families will be given referral information to assist in the transition to a program better suited to the family's needs.

If you, the parent, are uncooperative in completing and returning forms, fail to pay your tuition on time, fail to follow any state or county regulations, or fail to follow any of the aforementioned procedures outlined throughout this handbook, it may be necessary to dismiss your child from our school.

School Closures

The school will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following day, Christmas Eve and Christmas

If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it may be observed on a Friday or Monday. After school and school age students will be permitted to stay on public school closure days and will be required to pay the full-time daily rate for the number of days attending.

In addition, the school may be required to close due to inclement weather. The school takes into consideration several factors when making a judgment as to whether we will open late or close early due to inclement weather including assessing local authorities' recommendations, local road conditions and forecasted temperatures. Please call the School, check our website, listen to the radio or watch television for announcements about closings due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Attendance

School Hours:

This school is open Monday through Friday, 12 months per year. Please see above for predetermined Holiday Closings. Since we are licensed only for specific hours of operation, no early drop-off or late pick-up can be allowed. Please speak with the Director for exact hours of operation as they vary by location.

Arrival:

We recommend all children arrive by their classroom's morning group time. Morning activities usually begin at this time and this will help your child to be a fully participating group member. All children must be escorted into a classroom by an adult. Upon arrival into the classroom, we ask that you wash your hands as well as your child's hands. This will help us minimize the spread of illness. Your child's arrival must be acknowledged by the classroom teacher before you can leave your child. Please note that if your child arrives after breakfast time, we will not be able to provide this service.

Departure:

To pick up a child from our school, an adult must come into the building, sign the child out and let the teacher be aware of your presence and escort the child out of the building. The family or guardian must always supervise their child after leaving the classroom, both inside the building and in the parking area. If someone other than a family member is picking up a child and is not an approved pickup in Brightwheel, they will be asked for a picture ID to match the person to the name given by the family.

Late Pick-up Fee:

We expect parents to respect and abide by our hours of operation. We recognize that it is not always possible to pick up your child by closing time. We ask that you call us NO LATER than 30 minutes prior to closure so we can tell your child when to expect you, so they don't worry in addition to determining our staffing needs. There will be a charge of \$10.00 for the first 5 minutes after closure time

and \$1 per minute after those first 5 minutes have elapsed payable in cash upon arrival to the staff who is caring for your child after hours of operation. This charge may be waived by the Director or administration for extenuating circumstances. If you have not contacted us by 30 minutes after closure our first assumption is that something accidental in nature has occurred. In this case we will make every effort possible to contact parents, guardians, or other adults who have permission to pick up a child. If we are not successful in contacting anyone, we will first contact the police and request that they attempt to determine if something accidental has occurred and to assist us in locating a guardian who has permission to take custody of your child. Only as a LAST RESORT, we will contact the state licensing agency to come and take custody of your child. We are not licensed for after-hours care. The state has a special license for this, and our employees are not allowed to take custody of your child by removing them from the premises. If there are three or more incidents within one quarter, your child will be dropped and not allowed to return without the Directors permission and a new registration fee.

Health and Safety

General Safety Statement:

All the policies, rules and regulations presented in this handbook are designed to make the time your child spends at our School safe and rewarding. We have taken several steps to promote the safety and protection of your child while in our care. They are as follows:

- All exits and entrances are locked and only accessible by code entry or key
- Secure check in/out tablet with individual pin codes to determine precisely who is accessing the school
- Frequent observations of the classrooms are performed by the administration
- Daily professional cleaning and sanitizing of the entire school

Classroom Safety:

Our school provides equipment and furnishings that are child-sized, sturdy, safe and in good repair. Individual teachers are responsible for the set-up of their classroom. It is part of their daily routine to wash and sanitize toys and furniture and to watch for and eliminate any hazards present in the classroom. Teachers are provided with guidelines as to what equipment and toys should exist in each classroom.

Playground Safety:

Safe, age-appropriate outdoor environment is provided for our children. The following rules are enforced for indoor and outdoor play areas:

- When a class has outdoor time, all children must stay with their class
- Teachers supervise the children on the playground at all times
- In case of an accident, one teacher may bring a child in for first aid
- At no time will the class be left on the playground without appropriate supervision
- The administration and the teachers will inspect the playground daily and report any unsafe conditions immediately



Sick Policies

Our ultimate goal is to provide a place where your child can learn, develop and have fun in a safe and healthy environment. The school is not equipped with the staff or facilities to care for sick children for an extended length of time. We depend on you to assume care for your sick child. The following guidelines for excluding children help us to keep many communicable illnesses out of our facility and thereby maintain regular attendance for the majority of the children and staff. It is your responsibility to report to the School any infectious or communicable disease for which your child is diagnosed.

A child may not be allowed admission if they have a temperature of 100.4° or higher. If a child is sent home with a fever, he/she may not return to the center until they have been fever-free for 24 hours, without medication.

If a student presents a fever over 100.4°, parents will be notified by phone call and a Brightwheel message to pick up their child immediately. If the parents are not available, we will start calling the alternate contacts that are listed in the files. We will continue calling until we actually speak to a person. Children with fevers over 100.4° degrees will not be allowed to stay at the school. They must be picked up and cared for by a parent or emergency contact. If we cannot establish contact with a parent or alternate contact, we may at our discretion transport the child to emergency medical care if we believe medical attention is necessary.

In addition, a child will be excluded from the classroom by a member of our administration while the family members are contacted to pick up within one hour in the event of:

- Diarrhea episodes of more than two in a day
- Skin rashes that are not diagnosed by a physician's note
- Vomiting episodes of more than one a day
- Nose drainage that is thick and green or excessive for the comfort of the child
- Eye drainage of any type accompanied by red eyes or mucus crusted around the eyes
- Pink eye or symptoms similar to those of pink eye
- Chicken pox or measles sores are suspected
- Scabies systems are suspected
- Respiratory problems including uneven breathing or severe coughing with wheezing or croup
- Sore throat, especially if swollen glands are suspected
- Strep throat symptoms are suspected
- Head lice are found and visible
- Appearance or behavior is unusual, and the teachers agree that the child is not feeling well enough to participate with the rest of the class including lack of appetite, confused or irritable
- Unusual color is noticed in the child such as jaundiced eyes or skin, pale in the face, stool or urine is an unusual color

All of these conditions (except fever) will require 24-hour treatment or a doctor's note for the child to resume their normal attendance schedule. Children must be completely fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of medication before returning to the school.



If your child becomes ill at the school, we will contact you and isolate your child from other children until she/he is picked up from School. If your child is absent, please contact us and let us know the reason. We will need this information to prevent the spread of contagious disease in the facility.

Medication Policy

Medication for students must be directed to the front office and managed by the Center Director or Assistant Director. All medications must be kept in a cabinet, drawer or refrigerator. All medication must be clearly marked with child's first and last name. Sunscreen, bug spray or diaper creams must be clearly labeled as well and must be directed to the Center Director for administering.

Medication Policy

Childcare centers are **not** required to administer medications. We do this as a courtesy for our families and students. It is incredibly important that the following procedures are followed. Otherwise, the administration will decline to administer medication to your student.

All families must provide a signed authorization including administration and dosage procedures for each medication to be administered. Any potential adverse reaction to the medication must be listed on the authorization so that the child can be properly monitored, and families notified accordingly. Additional procedures include:

- Prescription medication must be in its original container bearing the pharmacist's label
- Written authorization from the child's family and written doctor's authorization and instructions stating:
 - The child's full name
 - The name of the medication or the prescription number
 - The amount and frequency of dosage
 - The name of the prescribing physician
 - The date the instructions were signed by the physician
- We will not administer any medication after its expiration date or for non-medicated reasons, such as to induce sleep.
- We will not accept a Medication Authorization Form that states the medication to be given "as needed."
 - Parents must indicate the exact conditions under which the medication should be given.
- Only **ONE** medication can be listed on each Medication Authorization Form
- All medications must be dropped off and picked up at the front desk, each day. These medications will be stored in a locked secure area inaccessible to the children. Medication may not be transported to the classroom by families
- Children are not allowed to bring any type of medication to the School to administer themselves.
- **NO MEDICATION MAY BE PLACED IN THE CHILD'S BAG OR TAKEN INTO THE CLASSROOM FOR ANY REASON**
- All medication must be taken home daily to ensure proper family control
 - Exceptions to this rule are life-saving medications such as breathing treatments. Any child needing these types of medications administered will be placed on a "Care Plan" developed by



the child's family, a medical expert, and the administration. Any "Care Plan" currently in use will remain so until renewal time (at least every 6 months).

Thank you for adhering to this policy to ensure the health and safety of all children.

Emergency Medical Care:

Each child, upon enrollment, must have emergency care information on file. It is the family's responsibility to keep this information current. In the case of a medical emergency, you will be notified immediately.

If warranted, emergency medical personnel will be contacted to provide transportations to the nearest hospital specified on the Health and Emergency Information form. If possible, a member of the School administration or the child's teacher will accompany the child.

Immunizations:

The School must have on file the Immunization Records and latest physical for each child with specific dates recorded. These forms are obtained from a private physician or the local Health Department. The immunizations must include:

- Series of 5 DPT doses (age appropriate)
- 4 doses of polio (OPV)
- 2 doses of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) (age appropriate)
- Completed 3-shot hepatitis series
- Varicella (chicken pox) shot
- All forms must be dated and signed by a physician before the child's first day of school

Accident Reports

Staff members may apply simple first aid at the school for minor injuries such as cuts, abrasions, bruises and insect bites. If any of these occur and first aid is administered, a "Boo-Boo Report" will be completed in addition to a Brightwheel notification (when appropriate). This report will state the nature of the injury, the cause and the treatment. It will be signed by the teacher who completed the report, a member of administration and the family. The administration will then file the log into the child's file. If an accident is caused by or involves another child, that child's name cannot be given out and will not appear on the report. Families will be notified immediately if a child receives an injury other than a minor one.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Our staff is trained annually on reporting suspected abuse or neglect of a child. In the event a trained staff member feels a child has been abused or neglected, that staff member has responsibility to report his/her suspicion to the school's administration. At that time, the administration will determine if the suspected abuse or neglect is accurate. If the administration then feels that the suspicion is founded, they will contact social services to begin a formal investigation. All activity will be documented, including the initial report by the staff member. The staff member may choose to remain anonymous.



All allegations of abuse or neglect will be received by the state agency overseeing childcare. The county department of social services will determine if an investigation is needed within the 24 hours of the complaint.

We take our responsibilities to report suspected child abuse, neglect, and abandonment seriously and will cooperate with governmental authorities in connection with their investigations. If you have any questions regarding the school's mandatory reporting obligations, please consult the administration.

Reporting of Accidents and Hazards

All accidents, including those which do not involve serious injury, must be reported immediately to the administration by the staff member. Only through full knowledge of accidents can we strive to maintain a safe and healthy place.

Immediately report any unsafe conditions, defective equipment or other hazards to the administration. Children are expected to assist in maintaining safe conditions. Safety is a state of mind and requires constant vigilance and common sense. Safety is everyone's responsibility.

Emergency Procedures

If an emergency situation develops such as severe weather, fire, physical problems with the building, or power failure, the children's safety is our first concern. Evacuation route diagrams are posted throughout the facility.

The school is equipped with a fire alarm system, a sprinkler system and fire extinguishers throughout the facility.

Fire drills are performed on a monthly basis and all staff members are instructed on evacuations. In the event of a natural disaster such as a hurricane, tornado, snowstorm, etc., the families will be notified as soon as possible to pick up their child. If the family cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called (this person should be local to the school).



Child Conduct

Basic Expectations:

Our discipline policy is built around our understanding of child development. Our goal is to allow each child to find and develop their own personal self-management skills. As teachers and staff, we offer children choices, so they feel powerful in their ability to gain self-control. We use positive behavior management techniques such as positive phrasing and “I” statements as ways to further develop self-discipline. In situations where children are having a difficult time managing negative emotions, they may be removed from the over-stimulating environment to a quiet area where a teacher or member of the administrative staff can work one-on-one to resolve the situation. Families will always be informed if a situation such as this has occurred. If a child continues to have a difficult time, a meeting with the family may be requested. This meeting will consist of the team developing a plan of action to best meet the needs of the child and the family.

Discipline:

Praise, positive reinforcement, and redirection are effective methods for the behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline.

At all Otter Learning schools, we use a method of ‘redirection’ to guide children toward appropriate behavior. If a child is engaged in behavior that is not conducive to a safe and happy learning environment, the teacher will “redirect” the child toward appropriate behavior.

Child Behavior

Children will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate dismissal for:

- Abuse or damage of school property
- Bullying/Harassment/Hazing
- Committing a serious breach of conduct inside or outside of the School
- Disrespect
- Disruption of School functions
- Fighting
- Lewd or obscene behavior
- Possession or sale of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or drug related items
- Possession or use of a weapon, among other things
- Profanity or vulgarity
- Sexual or other misconduct
- Stealing
- Threatening behavior
- Verbal or physical assault
- Violation of School’s “Computer/Network Policy”
- Inappropriate use of the Internet
- Willful disobedience



Biting:

The school understands that occasional displays of aggression, like biting, are typical in young children who are unable to communicate their feelings and are part of normal early childhood development. Repeated incidents of biting will not be tolerated and could result in dismissal from the school if the behavior persists. Our objective is to ensure that our school maintains the highest level of safety within our environment and our staff members respond appropriately to aggressive behaviors.

Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy:

Our school is dedicated to fostering an environment that promotes kindness, acceptance, and embraces differences among individuals. Therefore, we will not tolerate any type of harassment, bullying or hazing.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, and other verbal, graphic, or offensive conduct relating to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, citizenship, or disability.

Bullying includes, but is not limited to, physical or verbal aggression (hitting, kicking, taunting, name-calling, teasing, threatening, ridiculing, etc.), relational aggression (harming or threatening to harm relationships or acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion), and emotional aggression (teasing, threatening, intimidating others). The School also prohibits cyber-bullying (creating websites, instant messaging, e-mails, text messaging, using camera phones or other forms of technology to engage in harassment or bullying).

Any of these types of offensive conduct can create an uncomfortable learning environment. All concerns relating to harassment, bullying or hazing should be reported immediately to the administration. When the school administration becomes aware of harassment, bullying or hazing, the situation will be promptly investigated. Any child found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including immediate dismissal from school. No retaliation or adverse action will be taken against any person who makes a good faith report of harassment, bullying or hazing.

Behavior Probation

Children may be placed on behavioral probation for violating any of the above rules, at the school's discretion. At such time, the family may receive a probationary letter from the school outlining conditions of continued enrollment. Failure to comply with the stipulations in the disciplinary probation agreement may result in dismissal.

Family Cooperation:

A positive and constructive working relationship between the School and its families is essential to the fulfillment of the school's educational purpose. Thus, the school reserves the right not to extend the privilege of enrollment or re-enrollment to a child if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of the child's family make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interferes with the school's accomplishment of its educational purpose. Moreover, the school reserves the right to expel a child at any time if, in the judgment of the administration, conduct of anyone directly associated with the child, including but not limited to the child's family, in or out of the school, is not in keeping with the school's accepted standards or principles. There will be no refund of tuition where such enforced withdrawal occurs, and any unpaid balance is payable in full according to the terms of the child's enrollment contract.



Other General Policies & Procedures

Diapering:

Children are checked at scheduled intervals throughout the day and changed at the first sign of wetness or soiling. No child is knowingly left in wet or soiled clothing. For children who wear diapers or toilet training pants, each family must provide an ample supply for each day/week. We do not supply these items and families will be notified if a child is running low on supplies.

Naptime:

All younger children are required to have a quiet time following lunch and are encouraged to sleep during this time. Children who are five years of age and older are not expected to nap (unless required under state regulations) but are provided with quiet time. Children who fall asleep will be allowed to sleep until the end of the rest period, as designated by the daily schedule. Children may bring a small item to comfort them and help them rest. The item, including pillows, must be small enough to fit into their cubby. We are not able to accept any requests to force your child to NOT fall asleep during rest time.

Toilet Training

When you believe that your child is ready to begin toilet training, please discuss this with your child's teacher and the administration. We will assist by encouraging your child to visit the toilet between diaper changes. With the first signs of success, we will recommend that you send your child to school in training pants. Because toilet training can result in many soiled clothing items at school, please be sure your child comes to school with several (two to three) changes of clothing each day. Be sure extra clothes are appropriate to the present season and are labeled with your child's full name. All soiled clothing will be sent home the same day for laundering. The school is prohibited from laundering any child's soiled clothing within the school's laundry.

Field Trips:

Classes for children 6 years and older (school aged) may plan field trips during the year to acquaint children with community resources and to provide educational experiences that will enhance classroom-learning activities. A signed participation and release form is mandatory for field trips. A child will be unable to attend a field trip unless a signed field trip form is received from a designated family member or guardian. An information sheet and participation and release form will be sent home for each field trip the child is scheduled to attend. Families are encouraged to contact their child's teacher to see if additional chaperones are needed.

A child may be checked out from a field trip as long as the family has signed a release form. This policy is to help the staff keep an accurate count of the children. Classes will use the school's bus or vans for trips unless another means of transportation is authorized by the administration.

Lost and Found:

All items turned in to the Lost and Found will be held for 30 days. If not claimed, they will be discarded or donated to a charitable organization.



Meals and/or Snacks:

Our school participates in the Childcare Food Program and provides nutritious breakfast and lunch every day along with a snack in the afternoon. Meals and snacks served at our school comply with the meal patterns for children in childcare standards which are based on the recommended nutrient intake judged by the National Research Council to be adequate for maintaining good nutrition.

Allergies and Special Diets:

A weekly menu is posted in the school including all food that will be served for snacks and meals. Any special diets for food allergies, not available by the school, must be provided by the family and accompanied with a physician's note. This includes children who prefer water or juice instead of milk during meals. No tuition discount is given for food brought in by families. No food shall be brought in for your child or the class without prior approval from the administration.

Personal Belongings:

Upon enrollment in our program you should plan to bring the following for your child:

- At least two (2) complete changes of clothing appropriate for the weather with each item labeled with the child's name, including socks and underwear
- A supply of disposable diapers and baby wipes for children who are not yet toilet-trained
- You may bring a crib-size lightweight blanket or soft toy for rest time that is labeled with the child's full name
- All items must fit in your child's cubby. Large pillows, large blankets and pillow-pets that do not fit in the cubby are not permitted. We encourage travel size pillows
- Any prepared food for infants or toddlers who are not yet able to eat items listed on the weekly menu labeled with first and last name
- All children will be outside during the day, weather permitting. Please make sure your child has adequate clothing for outside play. (This includes closed-toe shoes preferably. Flip flops or sandals will be allowed only if snug to the foot and rubber soled)
- If your child is too sick to go outside, a physician's note explaining the reason should accompany the child before the exclusion is accepted

Pets:

Because of health and safety concerns, pets may not be brought to School without the Owner's advance consent. When picking up or dropping off your child, please keep pets in the vehicle.

Classmate Information:

To set up play dates or send party invitations, etc., families often ask for the phone numbers and/or addresses of other children in the school. We will happily pass notes or messages from you, but we cannot release confidential contact information.



Prohibited Items:

The following items should not be brought to the School by children:

- Cell phones
- Tablets, iPads, handheld gaming systems and similar items
- Cameras and video cameras
- Skateboards
- Electronic games (unless approved by administration)
- Inappropriate reading material
- Any other items that would distract from learning
- Chewing gum or candy

Telephones:

Children are allowed to use the office phones for an emergency with a note from a teacher. Cell phones may only be used with the permission of administration.

Toys:

The school provides many toys for the children's learning centers. Therefore, we request that toys not be brought from home. Please note this does not include special transition objects such as blankets or other security items to which your child is significantly attached.

Transportation:

Transportation is provided only with parental permission. The transportation forms must be signed once a year. Field trip forms must be signed before each trip.

If we take your child to school in the morning, then we will pick up your child at dismissal time unless otherwise notified. If we do not take your child to school, then we assume that she/he is absent and we will not expect to pick up your child unless it is agreed upon in advance that you will provide morning transportation and we will provide afternoon transportation.

You must notify us each time your child does not need transportation to or from school when we normally provide this service to you. If we are not notified that your child does not need transportation from school to the school in the afternoon before the bus leaves our facility, a \$10 fee will be charged.

Visitors and Volunteers:

Families and visitors are welcome at the school during school hours while their child is present. Families and visitors must first report to the staff at the front desk before visiting any class or any other location on school property during school hours. Families who want to help in the classroom, playground or during field trips are asked not to bring siblings or other children with them. Former families, children or guests of children must receive approval from the Director to enter the facility during School hours.



Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding mothers, including employees, shall be provided a private and sanitary place to breastfeed their babies or express milk. This area will have an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, and nearby access to running water.

Photo Release Policy:

Upon review of this handbook, you will receive a copy of our Photo Release Policy to read and sign. Many pictures will be taken in your child's class and throughout the school during the time that your child is attending our school and from time to time these pictures will be shared to you via Brightwheel, which is a PCI Level I secure application (highest standard rating). Other families and teachers may take snapshots of parties and special events within the program. If for any reason you do not want your child photographed, please let the director know in writing as soon as possible.

Confidentiality:

Information pertaining to the children enrolled at the school and the staff employed at the school is considered confidential.



Acknowledgement and Receipt of Parent Handbook

The registration of a child is considered an acceptance, on his/her part and on the part of his/her families or guardians, of the terms and conditions of the Parent Handbook and all of our school's rules and regulations, including the school's tuition policies and judgment on disciplinary sanctions or dismissal of a child.

The rules and regulations contained in this Handbook are not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, they presuppose the goodwill and judgment of a child in all circumstances in which he/she may find himself/herself and are subject to the School's ultimate discretion, judgment and interpretation.

Children and families or guardians are asked to familiarize themselves with all of the information contained in this Parent Handbook and to sign this form to acknowledge adherence to these policies.

I have read, understood and agree to abide by and honor all statements and provisions set forth in the Parent Handbook or as they may be changed from time to time by the school.

Child Name(s) Age(s) Date

Signature of Family Member Relationship Date