

Precious Gems Montessori

Parent's Handbook

The contents of the handbook provide all necessary information pertaining to the policies and procedures of Precious Gems Montessori School in the state of New Jersey. After reading through the handbook, please be sure to complete and sign the enclosed form and return to the office with necessary attachments.

Should you need to contact us on any matter before or after our scheduled office hours between 8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m., we appreciate it if you leave a message on the answering machine; we will return your call as soon as possible.

School Goals

- To provide a warm and secure learning environment and a variety of stimulating activities for children.
- To make learning an enjoyable experience for the child.
- To develop a positive relationship between our teachers and the families we serve.

School Philosophy

The early childhood years are referred to as the “absorbent mind”; therefore, during these years it helps children to reach their maximum learning potential and to help them become well-balanced individuals able to cope with the emotional and social pressures of modern-day living.

We believe in educating the “whole child” by meeting each child where he/she needs to be developed. We provide a program which will stimulate the child’s love of learning, giving the child the best possible foundation for academic growth, and our goal is to create a better and more complete child.

Children have a deep sense of wonder, and it is here that we begin our studies with them in areas of language, mathematics, science, geography, music, art, and learning about everyday life. A child is given freedom within the limits of a carefully structured environment; this allows the child to develop naturally at his or her own pace in order to fulfill their potential for learning.

The multi-age classroom gives children opportunities to work together cooperatively in a non-competitive setting. In this setting children become sensitive to each other’s needs and help each other in learning new skills.

Montessori most importantly recognizes that no two students learn at the same pace; our goal is to be flexible and be creative in addressing each student as a unique individual.

School Policies and Procedures

Arrival and Dismissal

Hours for the Pre-primary classes are 8:45~11:30 for the morning session, 12:30~3:15 for the afternoon session, and 8:45~3:15 for the full day session.

For safety's sake, we insist that parents deliver children to the classroom door. Please do not drop your child off outside of the building, and never leave children or siblings alone in a car when entering the building.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with a person who has not been properly identified by the parents. Therefore, a written note must report any change from the regular routine from the parent.

Please note the time each session ends and be sure to pick up your child on time. The anxiety of waiting for a late pick-up spoils what might otherwise be a joyful school experience. If unforeseen circumstances cause you to be late, please call the school and let us know, so that we may prepare your child appropriately.

Pick-up Authorization

A letter of authorization for your child to car pool with another parent or sitter is required. It is our policy not to release a child to anyone except the parents or authorized car pool drivers unless we have received a release in writing from the parent.

Class Observations

We welcome observation of our classes by educators, prospective parents, and other interested persons. We have an open-door policy regarding observations of enrolled students by their parents. Class observations for prospective parents will be scheduled by notifying the office prior to the date of the observation so that we can arrange it with the teacher. If you would like to confer with your child's teacher, a time before or after class must be scheduled with her ahead of time.

Mailboxes and Notices

Parent mailboxes are located by the entrance. Please check them daily for any important notices. Notices of general importance will be posted on the parent information board.

School Items that Travel Home by Mistake

Occasionally, small pieces of equipment make their way into little pockets and travel home with a child. We ask that if you find any curious-looking articles in your child's clothing or book bag at the end of the day, you return them to the teacher: this should be done by the parent or parent and child in a non-judgmental manner.

Children's Clothing

Children should be dressed in clothing that tends to increase mobility and encourage independence. It is not in the best interest of your child to wear party clothes in the classroom. All items of clothing should

have name tapes or be labeled with an indelible marker or name stamp. Please do not send your child in with smooth-soled jellies, sandals, or party shoes, as they are slippery and dangerous on the playground equipment. To help our students toward self-reliance, we strongly urge you to send your child to school in clothes that can be easily removed by him when necessary. Every time a child needs to ask for help for a task that he could be doing for himself, his sense of independence and self-confidence are impeded. We therefore discourage shoulder straps and suspenders on pants. Young children can more easily manage pants with an elastic waist during their early years than those with snaps and a belt.

Change of Clothing

All children need a complete change of weather-appropriate clothing that can be left at school. (A complete set means: a pair of socks, shorts/pants, shirt/sweater, and underwear.) Accidents and spills can happen throughout the day, so we want to be prepared. It is also advisable to send in a sweater or sweatshirt (labeled) that can be left at school in case of changes in weather during the day.

Sleeping Bags and Pillows

Full day students will need a sleeping bag and pillow for rest/nap time. They will be sent home every Friday to be washed and should be brought back on Mondays.

Personal Property

The school cannot be responsible for articles lost, stolen, or damaged within our facility – both inside and outside areas.

Personal Items from Home

We insist that toys, valuables, jewelry, candy, and etc. be left at home. These items are not permitted in the classroom. They very often cause conflicts and are lost during the day, which can be upsetting to the children. Please help reinforce this policy with your child(ren) by insisting that personal belongings be left at home where they will be safe until return. We sincerely appreciate and expect your cooperation in this matter.

Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled two times throughout the school year. Please refer to your school calendar for exact dates. The first verbal conference will be held in the fall, the focus of which will be a sharing session between parents and teachers. The purpose of this conference is for parents and teachers to get to know each other a little better, gather information from the parents as to the child's adjustment and interest in the environment, and general sharing of information regarding the child's interactions within the classroom environment. This conference will last approximately 15-20 minutes and sign-up sheets will be posted at least one week prior to the scheduled date. The focus of this conference is a general summation of your child's growth in all areas of development (intellectual, physical, emotional, social) as observed in the classroom setting.

We invite both parents to participate in all conferences. We ask that you do not bring siblings to conferences so that you will be able to focus your full attention on the discussion at hand. In addition to these scheduled conferences, you are always welcome to consult with your child's teachers at any time

during the school year. Your child's teacher is interested in knowing such things as an inability to sleep well for several consecutive nights, the birth of a sibling, stress occurring at home or in school, and pertinent medical or other information providing insight into your child's behavior. Parents are requested not to hesitate to inform the teacher of such matters, either by telephone or in writing, as they are considered and kept confidential.

Field Trips

Teachers may schedule field trips throughout the year. Signed permission slips are required for your child to attend each trip; therefore, slips will be distributed prior to each trip planned. If you know of any appropriate, exciting destinations, we welcome suggestions.

Snacks and Lunch

The school provides two nutritious snacks per day. The snacks are from the basic food groups and are served mid-morning and mid-afternoon. For parents preparing their children's lunch, make sure your child's noon meal provides for at least one-third of the child's nutritive requirements from the four basic food groups – dairy, protein, fruit/vegetables, and grains.

Teachers will heat entrées in our microwave, provided they do not require a lot of preparation. Please put your child's lunch in a microwave-safe container; otherwise, we will assume that it does not need to be warmed up. In addition, it is very helpful to have the fruit peeled or sliced the way your child enjoys it. Please understand that the teachers have a limited amount of time in which to prepare lunches. Your child's lunch will be refrigerated upon arrival. Lunch boxes/bags should be clearly labeled with your child's name to help avoid any confusion.

Your child will be encouraged to eat the balanced meal that you have provided. However, if your child refuses certain foods, he/she will not be forced to finish the meal.

Birthdays

We celebrate your child's birthday with a special candlelight ceremony. We use this opportunity to acknowledge each child's wonderful individuality by celebrating the anniversary of his/her birth with pictures and stories. Therefore, we ask that you share with us some photographs of your child depicting each year of his/her growth and some special events that have occurred. If you would like to share a special, healthy snack with the class, please use the sign-up sheet and remember to inform the teachers a few days in advance.

Playtime Reminder

Our general policy is to go outdoors each day, unless it is raining or exceptionally cold. We believe that if a child is well enough to come to school, the child is well enough to go outside. Be sure your child has clothing appropriate to the temperature. Please label all spare clothing. Please dress your child each day in rugged play clothes as opposed to party or dress clothing. Not only will your child's clothing wear longer, but your child will be more comfortable in moving and climbing about. Keep in mind also that when a child comes home at the end of a school day with dirty or rumpled clothing, it is a sure sign that it was a very busy, active, and fun day!

Health and Safety Policies and Procedures

Suggestions Regarding Health

- Only a healthy child can learn well. Make sure that your child has his or her needed amount of sleep every night. TV programs and social activities should not interfere with regular and adequate rest.
- Provide an adequate, balanced diet with restrictions on sweets. This is essential for proper growth and development of your child.
- Provide clean, comfortable clothing, suitable for the weather.
- Arrange periodic visits to the dentist and doctor.

Toilet Learning

We believe that learning to use the toilet is a very personal and delicate adventure. Our goal is to have all the children able to attend to their own toileting needs on a regular basis. We will work together with parents to accomplish this goal of helping your child be independent in this area. Our staff will respond to individual requests to visit the bathroom and provide any help necessary.

Emergency Planning / School Closing

School may be closed due to inclement weather. Kindly check your email for information regarding closings before coming to school on inclement weather days. We ask that you use your judgment as to whether or not your child should attend school on a given day. One school day missed is not a disaster, but driving in snow or ice could be!

In the event of an emergency or crisis situation during school hours, we have prepared safety, precautionary, and emergency response procedures. Please feel free to speak to the administrative staff if you need any further information. Our goal, as always, is to prepare and maintain a safe and secure environment for our children and staff at all times. Please make certain that your emergency contact numbers are accurate throughout the year. In the event of a school closing or early dismissal, we will contact each parent/emergency contact person.

Medication Administered at School

State regulations prohibit us from dispensing anything other than prescription medication to the children. If it is necessary for your child to take a prescription medicine during school hours, you must bring it in the original container and give it directly to the office staff, who will give you a Medicine Instruction Form to fill out. We are not permitted to administer any medication without this form completed and signed by a parent. NEVER SEND MEDICATION OF ANY KIND IN YOUR CHILD'S LUNCH BOX.

School Business Procedures

Tuition Payment Procedures

Your tuition amount for the school year is broken down into 10 monthly payments. Payments are due the first day of every month, beginning in September and ending in June. Tuition payments should be delivered to the school office.

Should financial difficulties occur that preclude payment by the 10th of the month, it is the obligation of the parents to contact the director.

Application for admission is for the full academic year. In the event that you remove your child for any reason for an extended period of time, you must continue to make tuition payments if you want your child's space to be guaranteed.

No substitution days will be permitted for lost days due to absences, vacation, or scheduled holidays.

Before and After Care

Optional before and after care is available upon request and availability. If care is required on a daily basis or more frequently, then monthly tuition will be charged.

Late Pick-up Policy for After School Care

If a child is picked up later than 6:30 P.M., parents will be assessed \$5.00 for every 15 minutes. If the parent is late more than one hour and no one can be reached to pick up the child, then we are required by law to notify DYFS (Division of Youth and Family Services), who is then required to remain with the child until a parent/guardian can be located.

Late Payment of Tuition

In order for the school to meet its financial obligation, we request prompt payment of tuition. Unpaid tuition by the fifth of the month will receive a late charge of \$25.00.

Returned Checks

There is a \$30.00 charge to a tuition account for each check returned from the bank for any reason.

Discounts on Tuition

Second child discounts are available to families with more than one child enrolled in a school year. The discount is 10% of the lowest rate and 15% for 3 or more siblings.

Department of Children and Families
Office of Licensing

INFORMATION TO PARENTS

Under provisions of the **Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 3A:52)**, every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents and staff this written statement, prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent and staff member's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record-keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf> or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are available soon after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint investigation, you are also entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review, or you can view them at https://data.nj.gov/childcare_explorer.

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements, and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents. Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities and to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c.

169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) unsafe children's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents, and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the *State Central Registry Hotline*, toll free at (877) NJ ABUSE/(877) 652-2873. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to <http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/>.

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Policy on the Release of Children

Each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

1. The child is supervised at all times;
2. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
3. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the 24-hour State Central Registry Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

4. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
5. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
6. If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the 24-hour State Central Registry Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

For school-age child care programs, no child shall be released from the program unsupervised except upon written instruction from the child's parent(s).

Precious Gems Montessori School

Guidelines for Positive Discipline

Positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of the individual child, the group, and the adult. Methods of positive discipline shall be consistent with the age and developmental needs of the children, and lead to the ability to develop and maintain self-control.

Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells children what they should not do; positive discipline tells children what they should do. Punishment teaches fear; positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

You can use positive discipline by planning ahead:

- Anticipate and eliminate potential problems.
- Have a few consistent, clear rules that are explained to children and understood by adults.
- Have a well-planned daily schedule.
- Plan for ample elements of fun and humor.
- Include some group decision-making.
- Provide time and space for each child to be alone.
- Make it possible for each child to feel he/she has had some positive impact on the group.
- Provide the structure and support children need to resolve their differences.
- Share ownership and responsibility with the children. Talk about our room, our toys.

You can use positive discipline by intervening when necessary:

- Re-direct to a new activity to change the focus of a child's behavior.
- Provide individualized attention to help the child deal with a particular situation.
- Use time-out – by removing a child for a few minutes from the area or activity so that he/she may gain self-control. (One minute for each year of the child's age is a good rule of thumb.)
- Divert the child and remove from the area of conflict.
- Provide alternative activities and acceptable ways to release feelings.
- Point out natural or logical consequences of children's behavior.
- Offer a choice only if there are two acceptable options.
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. Don't say "bad boy" or "bad girl." Instead you might say "That is not allowed here."

You can use positive discipline by showing love and encouragement:

- Catch the child being good. Respond to and reinforce positive behavior; acknowledge or praise to let the child know you approve of what he/she is doing.

- Provide positive reinforcement through rewards for good behavior.
- Use encouragement rather than competition, comparison, or criticism.
- Overlook small annoyances, and deliberately ignore provocations.
- Give hugs and caring to every child every day.
- Appreciate the child's point of view.
- Be loving, but don't confuse loving with license.

Positive discipline is NOT:

- Disciplining a child for failing to eat or sleep or for soiling themselves
- Hitting, shaking, or any other form of corporal punishment
- Using abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment or any other form of emotional punishment of children
- Engaging in or inflicting any form of child abuse and/or neglect
- Withholding food, emotional responses, stimulation, or opportunities for rest or sleep
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriately long period of time

Positive discipline takes time, patience, repetition, and the willingness to change the way you deal with children. But it's worth it, because positive discipline works.

OOL/ GUIDELINES FOR POSITIVE DISCIPLINE/APRIL 2017