

Welcome to Kiddie Steps
Montessori

Parent Handbook



To new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year. We are so happy you are a part of Kiddie Steps Montessori School family. Over the course of this year our children will grow in a Montessori environment to become self-assured, vibrant students who love to learn. Parents are the most important teachers in the lives of their children and are a very important part of what makes our school community so special. We are honored to be partners with you in the development of your child. We rely on your communication, energy, support, and involvement to ensure a successful experience for your child. Kiddie Steps Montessori can benefit your child best when you understand the roles played by parents, teachers, and children. As we begin our 3rd year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things about Kiddie Steps Montessori and to orient you to our policies, procedures, resources, and events.

Please review carefully the information included in this handbook. It is intended to acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the school. It is important that you read it thoroughly. We do our best to remain in close communication with our families in a number of different ways.

- We use email to send our weekly newsletter and to communicate important information. Please make sure that we have your most updated contact information.
- You may visit our website at www.kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke for information about the school and to keep up to date on school events and news. Our school calendar can be accessed on the website.
- If you have suggestions, ideas or concerns, contact the Head of school and make arrangements to meet. She is your first line of communication.
- If you believe your ideas or concerns are not being addressed, please contact us at wendy@kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke
- An annual parent survey provides you with an opportunity to give us feedback covering the whole program.

We look forward to another wonderful and productive year.

Wendy Mwelu

Head of school

Linda Muka

Director

Grace Kariuki

Director

MISSION STATEMENT	4
EDUCATIONAL GOALS	4
OUR CORE VALUES	4
SCHOOL OVERVIEW	6
A. History and Philosophy	6
B. Location	7
C. Curriculum and Teachers	8
D. Family Commitment	9
E. Governance	9
ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT	9
A. Admission Guidelines	9
B. Admission Process	10
C. Student Success and Meeting Student Needs	10
D. Withdrawal	11
E. Information about Programs and Tuition	12
SCHOOL POLICIES	12
A. School Hours	12
B. No School Days	13
C. Attendance	13
D. Arrival and Dismissal	13
E. Late Arrival	14
F. School Closings	14
G. Health Policy	14
H. Child Safety	16
I. Communication	16
J. Clothing and Footwear	18
K. Nutrition: Lunches and Snacks	19
L. Naps and Quiet Time	19
M. Outdoor Play	19
N. Personal Possessions	20
O. Potty Training Policy	20
P. Child Custody Issues	20
Q. Academic Readiness	21
R. Special Services	21
SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS	21
A. Parent Observation	21
B. Parent Information Afternoons	22
C. Parent Teacher Conferences	22
D. Open Houses	22
E. Field Trips and Going Out Excursions	23
F. Birthdays	23
G. End of Term Celebration	24
A GUIDE TO THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM	24
A. Principles of the Classroom	24
B. The Three Year Cycle	24
C. Curriculum	24

MISSION STATEMENT

At Kiddie Steps Montessori, children and families experience an individualized education that builds the foundation for a lifetime of success and a love of learning through specialized teachers, lessons and materials in accordance with the principles and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

At Kiddie Steps Montessori we aim to provide high-quality, comprehensive education that fosters your child's love of learning and addresses the whole child academically, emotionally, and socially. The Montessori curriculum varies by program; however the goals for our school are consistent:

- **To enter a partnership with parents in the education of their children.**
- **To lead children toward mastery of individually identified intellectual, social, physical, and daily life skills.**
- **To foster in the children deep and persistent curiosity that will lead to lifelong pursuit of knowledge.**
- **To help children develop self-confidence.**
- **To assist each child develop a habit of concentration.**
- **To instill in each child a sense of personal responsibility for the world in which we live.**
- **To spark in our children wonder, imagination, and joy.**

OUR CORE VALUES

We believe that the pedagogical principles and practices developed by Dr. Maria Montessori fundamentally respond to the developmental characteristics and needs of children. We seek to utilize her educational principles and methodologies in all of the programs offered at Kiddie Steps Montessori.

- We believe that all children deserve to develop in an environment that is nurturing, safe and intelligent.
- We believe that parents are the principle influence in the child's life. The school provides a secondary supportive role to the home. It is a tandem cooperative relationship between home and school which best serves the child.

- We believe that the model of our own behavior serves as the most distinct teacher to the child.
- We believe that every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual preference, religion, race or disability.
- We believe that intelligence is not rare, but a state of the healthy mind. As such, it can and should be nurtured and encouraged.
- We believe that wisdom can be nurtured and cultivated in a positive, affirming and intelligent learning environment.
- We believe that the development of whole, healthy individuals requires that our many dimensions be nurtured, including the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and emotional.
- We center the programs and curriculum of Kiddie Steps Montessori on the natural needs of human development.
- We describe the learning environment of Kiddie Steps Montessori as active as opposed to passive. The environment is dynamic, with children functioning as active agents in the learning process by making choices and learning to be responsible for those choices.
- We believe that the School has a responsibility to prepare its students for life, balancing academic excellence with the development of personal and practical life skills.
- We believe that the first six years of life are critical to the development of one's life.
- We offer a flexible learning environment that responds to individual needs, has an adaptable curriculum, and honors diverse learning styles.
- We strive to create a true balance among freedom, order and responsibility in each classroom.
- We believe that children can learn constructive modes of problem-solving and conflict resolution, thereby creating a more peaceful learning and living environment.
- We believe that we are intimately interdependent with other life forms on this planet. As educators, it is our responsibility to foster knowledge of, interest in and responsibility for the natural world we inhabit.

- We believe in the fullness of life and the value of a diverse community, which promotes an understanding for and acceptance of all peoples.
- We believe that all forms of expression and communication should be nurtured. Art, music, literature, drama and other forms are fundamental modes of expression for the human spirit.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

A. History and Philosophy

Kiddie Steps Montessori was founded in June 2014. It is a private institution for children aged 18 months – 6 years. Our highly trained, credentialed teachers nurture and cultivate each child's curiosity while providing a strong foundation for continued academic success. Kiddie Steps Montessori provides a warm, vibrant, educational home designed to foster a love of learning and help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace.

We strive to educate the whole child and to inspire children to be caring, socially responsible participants in their community and world. Our carefully prepared classrooms are staffed with a highly qualified, Montessori-certified head of school and specially trained staff. Multi-age classrooms allow the children to learn from one another and to be valued contributors to the classroom community.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to be an active part in their child's education. In addition to weekly newsletters, an active Facebook page, and a regularly updated website, we invite parents to observe in the classroom, join us on exploratory field trips, help us organize school events, charity donations and connect with each other informally, creating a network that links the classroom to the community, and in turn, to the world.

At Kiddie Steps Montessori we are invested in creating respectful relationships among teachers, administrative staff, parents, and children. We appreciate and celebrate diversity and recognize how we as a school benefit from the array of cultural backgrounds and traditions that families and staff members bring to our community. We work to provide an inclusive environment and do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap, or sexual orientation.

Our approach to education is based on the philosophy and methods of Maria Montessori, the first Italian female physician who founded the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907. Dr. Montessori believed that the goal of the educational process was to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn.

Dr. Montessori observed that all children have the same basic needs:

- **The need for order – to organize, classify and interpret reality.**
- **The need for independence – the impulse to act personally upon and within reality.**
- **The need for social relationships.**
- **The need to experience reality through imagination.**

The teacher carefully prepares the classroom environment and directs the activity of the classroom, but it is the child who learns. Dr. Montessori observed that children are motivated through the work itself and that children, like adults, learn best by doing rather than being filled with facts. Concentration, determination, and purpose established in early childhood lead to confident, successful learning later in life.

At Kiddie Steps Montessori, children learn how to observe, think, and evaluate and experience the joy of learning. **The Montessori approach is not a tweaking of traditional models of education, it is a completely different way of learning and teaching designed to prepare children for success in an increasingly complex world.**

Kiddie Steps Montessori is an advocate for the child, developing education programs that follow the natural needs and development of the child. We believe each person has the potential to achieve success through an ordered, challenging, nurturing educational environment that includes the whole person – intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical. At the center is the child, whose needs are the focus of the learning process. It is the role of the School's staff members not only to observe, but also to know and defend the rights of the child as he/she proceeds through the learning process.

B. Location

Kiddie Steps Montessori is located off Lenana Road, opposite the South African High Commission, on Turbo road, fourth gate on the left.

At our campus we have 4 classes.

Simba:	18months – 2.5 years.
Chui:	2.5 – 3.5 years
Kifaru:	3.5 – 4.5 years
Ndovu:	4.5 – 6 years

Each of our four classes accommodates 15 children with two adults in every class.

Each of the classrooms is thoughtfully arranged and offers an inviting space for activity that is focused and calm. Learning materials are displayed on shelves that are accessible to the children to foster independence as the students go about their daily work. There are spaces in the classroom that allow for group activity as well as areas where the student can work alone. Parts of each classroom are open and spacious to allow younger children to lay out strands of beads for counting students to explore a 10 foot long Timeline of Life. **There are well-defined spaces for each part of the curriculum, such as Language Arts, Math, sensorial and Culture.** Each of these areas features shelves or display tables with a variety of inviting materials from which students can choose.

C. Curriculum and Teachers

The term “Montessori” implies both philosophy and a method of education philosophy based on the research of Dr. Maria Montessori. **At its heart, the Montessori method emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and a respect for the child.** Classroom spaces are purposefully designed and materials carefully curated in pursuit of an education partnership. **Multi-aged classrooms provide** benefits that are readily apparent when visiting the classroom. **Younger children in the classroom have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work. Older students have an opportunity to reinforce their own knowledge by explaining what they are doing and assisting and mentoring younger children.** Each child can learn and develop at his own pace within a classroom that accommodates many levels of ability and complexity.

The experience and training of a Montessori teacher is integral to the Montessori method. All of Kiddie Steps Montessori’s Teachers are accredited by International Montessori Centre (MCI) in London and have completed extensive Montessori teacher training. Our teachers use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined innovative curriculum tailored to the child, and through each three-year cycle from the toddler program through to Kindergarten program. The

Montessori teacher is specially trained to observe each child and to design lessons based on that child's natural curiosity and love of learning. The teacher is responsible for preparing the educational environment within each classroom and for presenting lessons in that environment. During the course of a day, the teacher will demonstrate a wide array of concrete sensorial materials and sequential activities through individual instruction. The child soon learns to associate abstract concepts with hands-on experience.

D. Family Commitment

Parents are a fundamental part of the well-being of our school and of a successful educational experience for their child. As such, we have the expectation that all members of the school community participate and support the school whenever possible.

It is the hope and expectation of Kiddie Steps Montessori that parents make every effort to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we aim to help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education. Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications, including our regular email communications.

There are committees to assist in special programming and to help the school meet long-term goals. Teachers value the assistance and participation of parents in the classroom and in adventures beyond the classroom.

Both parents and students are enriched by parents' involvement in school activities.

E. Governance

Kiddie Steps Montessori is a private school. It is run and governed by the two directors and Head of school.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

A. Admission Guidelines

Admission at Kiddie Steps Montessori is subject to availability of space in the classrooms.

Classes are multi-age, and the school will make every reasonable effort to balance each class with respect to age and gender.

Kiddie Steps Montessori is open to all children regardless of race, sex, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap or sexual orientation.

B. Admission Process

Tour and observation. Though not required, a tour of our campus is strongly recommended. During this tour, you will meet our teachers, and will have the opportunity to observe a classroom “in action” and view our facilities.

Application. Interested families are encouraged to submit a completed application form accompanied by a Ksh. 5,000 non-refundable registration fee. The application form can be downloaded from the school website or school office.

Parent and Student Interview. Once a completed application is received an interview will be scheduled with you and your child. The interview is an informal way for prospective parents and the school representatives to become acquainted with each other and to share pertinent information. Your child will meet with a teacher and you (along with your spouse, partner, or other adult guardians) will meet with our Head of School and/or Director. Toddlers (18 months – 3 years) will explore the Montessori classroom materials with the guidance of a certified teacher. Kindergarten (3 – 6 years) typically will visit a classroom for a half-day.

Enrollment. The school will notify you immediately regarding the admissions if space is available. If your child is accepted but there are no openings, he or she will be placed in a waiting list until an opening exists.

C. Student Success and Meeting Student Needs

The Montessori environment is unique. It cultivates an inner discipline that is the foundation for further learning and social development. Occasionally the learning style of an individual child is not compatible with the climate of the Montessori classroom. If the class teacher becomes concerned about the suitability of the Montessori class for your child, she will contact you to set up a conference.

We want every child to experience the satisfaction and joy of a successful education. Generally, children adapt to the Montessori classroom within 60 days. If your child is not functioning successfully in the classroom, we will make educational recommendations to your family.

D. Withdrawal

Kiddie Steps Montessori is dedicated to maintaining a safe, harmonious classroom environment for the optimum development of all our students. Parents of children with excessively disruptive or hurtful behavior will be asked to seek professional assistance.

Enrollment Termination Process

- The class teacher will consult with the Head of School at the earliest opportunity to identify an at risk student.
- The Head of School will observe the student in the classroom and/or on the playground. She will provide the teacher with information and recommendations to address the child's needs.
- Staff will document specific incidents of behavior that are worrisome or problematic.
- If needs or problems are significant, the Head of School and class teacher will meet with parents. Using observations about patterns of behavior, a plan will be created to address the needs of the child. The need for specific professional consultation may be identified. If the need for professional support is requested, parents are expected to respond in a timely manner to acquire those services.
- A written statement of goals and strategies for achieving goals will be created with parents, the School and consulting professionals. A date for a progress review will be set.
- If support from the family is not forthcoming and/or the problems are of such severity that the climate of the classroom and safety of the other children is in jeopardy, parents will be given a date by which the student will be removed from the classroom and parents will need to obtain alternate care for their child.

Other Reasons for Withdrawal.

- The school operates on the tuition fees paid for services. If a family's account is 45 days or more past due, the child will be withdrawn from the program until the account has been brought up to current status. Written notification of intent to withdraw a child shall be made at least seven days prior to withdrawal.

E. Information about Programs and Tuition

Sept 2016 – July 2017

Registration fees –	5,000/=
3 ½ Days –	55,000/=
5 ½ Days –	60,000/=
5 full days –	65,000/=

School lunch

3 days –	8,500/=
5 days –	16,000/=

Discounts

- 5% Sibling discount on 2nd child.
- 10% sibling discount on 3rd Child.

**Tuition + lunch costs will change with notice given.*

SCHOOL POLICIES

A. School Hours

- ½ Day Program – 8.30-12.30
- Full Day program – 8.30-2.30

- Invoices.** Invoices for tuition payments are issued before each term and payments are due in the office by the first week of the term. Please make cheques payable to ***Kiddie Steps Montessori Limited.*** You may drop your payment in person to the school office or direct deposit into the school account in cash or M-PESA. (Mpesa details are available upon request from the school office.)
- Overdue Accounts.** After 45 days past due, you will be required to withdraw your child. Enrollment in other programs, e.g., summer programs, enrichment classes, next academic year and deposits for the following year will not be accepted unless your account is current. If your account is past due, all monies paid will be posted to the outstanding balance. Thereafter, monies paid may be used to secure future enrollment, provided they are accompanied by a signed re-enrollment contract demonstrating your intent.

B. No School Days

School is closed and no services are provided on the following days:

- Weekends.
- Public holidays
- ½ term break
- School holidays (Dec & April)

C. Attendance

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. Parents should notify the school by 9 a.m. if a child is unable to attend school. You *can reach the school on 0700 935 123 / 0722 790 949.*

Children with a contagious disease must be kept home for the health and safety of the other children. *Please inform the office if your child contracts a contagious disease.* More information can be found under the “Health Policies” section.

Daily attendance is vital for your child’s development. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

All kindergarten-age children must attend school daily. Parents should be aware that taking their children out of school for vacation could be detrimental to their education.

D. Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival – 8.30

Dismissal – ½ day: 12:30

Full day: 2:30

Arrival: When arriving at our school, parents should drive into the school compound slowly, park in the parking lot and enter the building from the cubby where a teacher will be waiting to greet you and your child. Parents are encouraged to make goodbyes short, and let the children tidy up their shoes and bag independently and let the teacher in charge walk your child to class. Older children are encouraged to tidy up and walk to class by themselves. Parents are encouraged to speak with their child’s teacher during pick up to avoid disrupting the class during morning drop off time.

Dismissal and Release of Children:

Please pick up your child at the designated time. If you will be late, please call the school. Late pick-up fine is Ksh.500 every half hour.

For your child's protection, we will not release a child to someone other than a custodial parent or individuals designated on the pick-up authorization form, unless a call is made to the head of school in advance or written authorization is provided to the school. We will ask for photo identification of the person picking up your child. Authorization can be granted on the emergency information form, but make sure to include a note anytime changes in regular dismissal are made.

Please be sure to let a staff member know when your child arrives and leaves the school.

E. Late Arrival

It is important that children arrive on time, as the beginning of the school day sets a tone for the classroom. Children who are rushed and arrive late may not be in the right frame of mind to begin their activities. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that your child has the opportunity to begin his/her work at the start of class. Parents should not enter classrooms or disturb teachers once the day has begun. All children are encouraged arrive between 8:30 – 9:00 am.

F. School Closings

During an emergency that may require the school to close down, a phone call will be made to the parents followed by an email requesting them to pick up their children. School transport will not operate in cases of riots/demonstrations for the safety of children and staff onboard. Parents will be required to come and pick up their children.

G. Health Policy

- i. **Immunizations.** Any child enrolling in Kiddie Steps Montessori for the first time must be adequately immunized, and a copy of their immunization record attached on the application form. A copy of your child's medical insurance is also needed to be attached on the Registration form.
- ii. **Illness.** For the protection of all of the students at the school, the Head of School reserves the right to send a child home whose health poses a threat to other children in the program. Any ill child should be kept home.

iii. Children should not be brought to school if they:

- **Have vomited within the last 24 hours**
- **Require more rest time than that provided by the program**
- **Are running a fever**
- **Are unable to play outside**

In addition, if your child has a communicable disease e.g., mumps, strep, chicken pox, hepatitis, pneumonia, measles, rubella, scarlet fever, scabies, pertussis, haemophilus/influenza type b, encephalitis or meningitis you **must** report this to the school office.

- iii. **Hand washing:** All Children must wash their hands before eating, and after using the bathroom, blowing their noses, and after outdoor playtime with teacher supervision.
- iv. **Handling bodily fluids:** All staff members are trained in cleaning procedures to protect the children and themselves from possible contamination from bodily fluids.
- v. **Controlling infection:** The school uses disposable paper products to control the spread of disease. If the staff notices a child showing symptoms of an infectious disease, we will call the parent to pick up their child immediately. When waiting for parent/guardian pick up, the child will be removed from the other children and be in a separate room under staff supervision.
- vii. **Medications administration:** Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to the teacher. It **cannot** be kept in your child's bag or lunch box. There are three things you must know about how we handle medications. These policies are for the protection of your child.
 - Written information in the child's diary which includes dosage and the time the medication is to be dispensed.
 - Give the medication to an adult. No medications are to be in lunch boxes. If you want your child to have vitamins or nonprescription drugs, please administer them at home.
 - The medication to be dispensed must be in its original, labeled pharmacy container with your child's name on it. This rule is for clarification in case of an allergic reaction and to help prevent any mistakes in medications.

H. Child Safety.

- i. **Parent Notifications.** Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any accidents, injuries or illnesses. Behavioral incidents will be communicated on a case by case basis depending on the seriousness of the incident. The classroom teacher will determine this and will communicate with you either immediately by phone or note in the diary or speak to you at the end of the school day for less serious matters.
- ii. **Employee Screening.** All employees are subject to criminal screening through the CID Department and are all expected to produce a certificate of good conduct upon being hired. All volunteers are screened for abuse and child neglect.
- iii. **Building Security and Emergency Preparation.** Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. Kiddie Steps Montessori conducts regular fire drills regularly throughout the year. We follow safety and emergency plans that are reviewed on an annual or as needed basis.
- iv. **Visitors.** We welcome and encourage visits to the school from parents, outside teachers, prospective families, and the larger community. When you visit the school, please report at the office.
- v. **Harassment.** All children must be free from harassment and bullying in our school. Children may not be cruel and/or abusive to each other in any way in our environment.
- vi. **Weapons.** No weapons of any sort – including play or pretend guns, knives, and similar items – are allowed on our campus. We do not encourage weapon toys for show & tell.

I. Communication

Most of the communication coming from the school will be disseminated electronically. It is essential that we have your email address and that you keep us current if that address changes.

Please make certain to read the weekly electronic newsletter as it contains important information about your child's classroom as well as school-wide information.

- i. **School Calendar.** The calendar of events for the school year is available on our website: (www.kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke) Changes and updates are made monthly on the calendar and are also communicated to you through our weekly electronic newsletter
- ii. **Email.** In our ongoing efforts to be more conscientious in the use of resources, most communication between the school and home will be made electronically. All regular correspondence from the school will be sent via email. If you are not receiving our weekly e-news (electronic newsletter) or other email communication inform us please inform on info@kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke. or , wendy@kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke
- iii. **Website.** Kiddie Steps Montessori has its own website. General information, the calendar of events, important forms, and other useful Montessori links can be found at our site: www.kiddiestepsmontessori.co.ke
- iv. **Weekly Electronic Newsletter (e-news).** You will be sent the Weekly e-news electronically at the beginning/end of each week. This important communication provides information on all school-wide activities, events, updates, volunteer activities, etc. as well as provides information on the specific activities of your child's classroom. Please be sure to notify the office if you are not receiving our Weekly e-news. ***Please be sure to provide the office with your updated email address.***
- v. **Social Media.** Social media can serve as a bridge between the school and the broader KMS community. Kiddie Steps Montessori provides information about school events as well as other items of interest to the community via an active Facebook page. We encourage you to 'Like' us on Facebook and to share our information with your community of family and friends.
- vi. **Changes of address or emergency contact information.** Whenever you change your address, home phone, work phone or emergency notification information, be sure to let the Head of School know. Please do not rely on your child's teacher to update the office. It is only by alerting both the teacher and the office to any changes that you can be sure we will change all documentation throughout the school. This includes our Child Information Sheet, billing list, mailing lists and classroom files. Both the office and the teacher emergency records need to be up-to-date. This is beneficial for your child's safety and protection.
- vii. **Problem resolution.** We believe that open communication and supportive relationships between home and school are imperative for the full development of the child. However,

we know that we are all human and things don't always go perfectly to everyone's satisfaction. Occasionally there might be issues, misunderstandings, conflicts, or communication confusion between parents and the school. If you have questions or concerns that you want to address, please start by contacting your child's classroom teacher. You may schedule a meeting if you wish. If you are not comfortable with the outcome of that meeting, you are encouraged to contact the Head of School.

At some point, the teacher may feel a need to meet with you about your child's development. If so, she will arrange a meeting time with you at a time that is convenient for all parties. She may request that the Head of School attend that meeting.

J. Clothing and Footwear

- i. **Clothing and Extra Items**. All clothing should allow children freedom to engage in a wide range of activities. Please help your child select clothing and shoes that allow freedom of movement. All children have outdoor playtime and/or physical education every day and should dress accordingly. Younger children should wear clothing that enables them to dress themselves easily. All children should be sure to have a full set of extra clothing, including socks and underwear. Please put all items in a plastic bag labeled with the child's name.

School uniform policy; KSM uniform policy applies to *all children aged 3 years*. The uniform can be purchased at the school office. Our uniform days are *Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays*.

- ii. **Outside Wear**. All students go outside most days. Outerwear should be appropriate to the weather. Appropriate shoes for school are sneakers or other casual shoes that may get dirty. The best shoes for easy removal/wearing have Velcro. Clogs, party shoes, or open-toed sandals are not appropriate for safe outside play. When there is mud, wellington boots are required.
- iii. **Indoor Shoes**. All children wear indoor shoes while in the classroom for several reasons. The Montessori Method recognizes the child's need for quiet and order in the classroom to allow him or her greatest opportunity for concentrated work. The opportunity to take off and put on shoes increases their level of independence and dressing skills. *Closed toe rubber shoes also eliminate a higher noise level in the classroom*. The children use mats for a great deal of floor work and indoor shoes help to maintain the cleanliness of the

environment, alleviating mud and dirt being tracked into the classroom with street shoes. We ask you to provide indoor shoes to be kept at school. Please encourage your child to choose simple and comfortable ones, **Ballet or crocs** are preferred as they are easier to wear and store. **Slippers with large character heads are not appropriate** because children are often uncomfortable if they are trying to sit with their feet directly under their bottom. Clog or backless type slippers tend to fall off frequently and are a distraction. To avoid confusion and prevent loss of clothing, *please label all garments with your child's name*. The Lost and Found clothing will be donated at the end of the school year in July.

K. Nutrition: Lunches and Snacks

Nutritious food is essential for young, growing bodies. We encourage parents to establish sound eating habits at an early age.

- i. Lunches:** Kiddie Steps Montessori is responsible for their child's lunches. We provide children with nutritious meals and snacks that cover all the basic food groups. We serve food that is nutritious and enjoyable to eat by the children.

We do not serve junk food/snacks at the school. We ask that parents don't send the same with their children.

We have a strict **Nut free policy** and ask that parents don't send any kind of nut product snacks for their children. This is due to life threatening allergies by some of the students. The school provides hot lunches to all students. In case we are not able to cater for your child's dietary needs, we ask that you collect your child before lunch for them to eat at home.

We do not cater for *milk/lactose allergies* and ask that parents provide milk alternatives for their children every beginning of the week as needed.

L. Naps and Quiet Time

All children still napping are encouraged to stay on the half day program. We do not have a napping area at the school.

M. Outdoor Play

Our program is designed to include outdoor play in all seasons. Students who stay in school all day need fresh air, exercise and free time on the playground. For our preschool students, we maintain a ratio of one adult for every 10 students. Therefore, we are not able to have a staff

member stay inside with one or two children who are sent to school with a cold, lingering ear infection, etc. Your child should be well enough to participate fully at school if he/she is in attendance.

Please be sure your child has appropriate clothing for outdoor play: sturdy, warm and easy to put on. Also, label ... label ... label. Please label everything you send to school. Children often do not recognize their own clothing. Labeling helps your child and us to sort out the myriad items that come into the School each day. Use names, not initials, and mark in an easily-read place.

N. Personal Possessions

Children often want to bring favorite possessions to school, but we ask parents to discourage this practice. We welcome books, items made by the child, or objects related to culture, science, or nature. Sharing these items with other children in the class will become a part of the classroom learning experience. We do not allow children to bring electronic devices including cell phones into the classroom. Please do not send valuables, including money, valuable documents or jewelry.

O. Potty Training Policy

We do not require your child to be potty trained to attend Kiddie Stops Montessori. Our teachers will guide you once your child shows signs of potty training. This is however done as a combined effort at home and school. Should we feel the child is not ready, we will keep them in diapers.

P. Child Custody Issues

Kiddie Stops Montessori is dedicated to the total development of each unique child. We believe that all children need a loving, supportive family. When a family separates, it is especially difficult for the children. Their loyalties are torn as they love and need both parents. The school will be supportive, open, and welcoming to both parents. We will remain neutral in conflicts between parents.

School records, conferences, meeting information, educational materials and similar items are available to both parents. Parents should try to schedule joint conferences with the teacher, but accommodations can be made for separate conferences. Parents, regardless of the custody arrangement, are entitled to information about the activities of the school and access to certain records. These records include: medical, and school records and notification of meetings regarding the child's education.

The school will not limit a parent's access to his/her child unless there is a court order on file in the child's records at the school limiting or specifying particular conditions for a parent's access to the child.

Q. Academic Readiness

In our program your child will not be evaluated as one of the criteria for enrollment. Whether your child knows colors or numbers is irrelevant. Of greater importance, the teacher is concerned about the whole child: his/her ability to communicate and to cooperate, and eagerness to accept and seek out new experiences.

Do not attempt to push your child into “readiness.” Make new experiences available, but do not attempt to force him/her inappropriately. This kind of pressure can produce anxiety and cause some fear. A special orientation session that we hold for new students allows the teacher an opportunity to get to know your child. It also provides the perfect climate for your child's introduction to Kiddie Steps Montessori.

R. Special Services

Occasionally a child may evidence the need for special services. These needs may be physical, developmental or psychological. We have been working with children for a long time. We are trained to spot needs that affect the child’s ability to learn and socialize successfully in a classroom setting. We will recommend evaluation and professional consultation. The school does not contact or contract for outside services. It is the decision and responsibility of the parents to make those arrangements.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

A. Parent Observation

All parents are welcome and encouraged to observe our classrooms. Seeing the children at work is to experience the Montessori philosophy in action. To make your observation more meaningful: take a look around the room and notice the amount and diversity of activity; the range of ages; the types of materials; the individual and group activity; and the interaction of the children. Focus your attention on the teacher and notice the composure, the teacher as observer, and the respect the teacher shows each child. Focus your attention on your child and notice the

succession of activities; the concentration on work; enthusiasm and self-satisfaction in each activity; and the child's respect for other children, the materials, and the teachers.

If you would like to observe a class, we ask that you make arrangements with the classroom teacher or our Head of school in advance to minimize disruption to the classroom and to make sure that the students will be in the room when you visit. When you arrive for your observation, please sign in at the office.

During a formal in-class observation, we request that you adhere to the following guidelines:

- ✓ Sit quietly in the observation chairs indicated.
- ✓ Try not to make your presence felt.
- ✓ Do not initiate conversation.
- ✓ Do not handle the materials.

We recommend these guidelines to minimize interference in the children's peaceful environment. Feel free to make notes of items you would like to discuss during your conference with the classroom teacher.

B. Parent Information Afternoons

At the beginning of each term, the school holds an informational meeting for new and returning parents. These parent-only MEETINGS are an opportunity to explain the school and classroom plans, policies and procedures for the new term. Parents have an opportunity to get acquainted, meet all classroom staff, and learn about the specifics of their child's classroom. The class teacher and teaching assistants will answer questions about classroom procedures, volunteer opportunities, etc. Dates for the informational meetings will be communicated via email at the beginning of each term on the school Calendar.

C. Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in every end of term (Dec, March & July). Parents are given the opportunity to select a convenient time for the conference. We believe good communication between home and school is essential to the best learning environment for the child. We encourage all parents to book and meet their child's teacher every end of term.

D. Open Houses

Children love to share their experiences, so this day is set aside for the children to show parents and other family members around their classroom. It is always a very special day for your scholar. The event will be indicated in the school calendar.

E. Field Trips and Going Out Excursions

We try to give ample notice for field trips, along with a permission slip for each trip.

Notification of a field trip is given to the parents at least one week prior to an off-campus event.

If you wish to have alternative care for your child for the duration of the outing, you will be responsible for making these arrangements.

The safety and protection of our students is a critical concern to Kiddie Steps Montessori. Off-campus trips create potential hazards that require us to take special precautions. The School reserves the right to refuse to be responsible for children off campus when past behavior patterns indicate an inability to follow directions and basic rules.

Field trips are purposefully organized for children aged 3-6 years. Excursions offer enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom setting. These trips allow children to see, hear, and experience what we cannot offer within the classroom walls. The trips usually relate to the topics being studied, but also may be scheduled to observe steps in a process or places and events that foster community awareness. We also attend musical events and visit museums of art in the area.

F. Birthdays

The Birthday Walk around the Sun. In the classrooms, each child is honored in a special celebration called “The Birthday Walk,” an international Montessori tradition. Parents share in this important occasion by helping their child select photographs from each year of her life and by helping her prepare a written history of milestones reached and fun times had during each year. These milestones are shared as the child walks around the “sun,” once for each year celebrated. Parents are invited to participate in this beautiful ceremony with their child. Please plan in advance on timings with the class teacher.

For birthdays, a cake is usually enough, party bags containing candy will be kept in the bags to be consumed away school.

G. End of Term Celebration

Every end of term, all parents are invited to watch presentations by all classes.

A GUIDE TO THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

A. Principles of the Classroom

The most important time for learning is the period between birth and six years of age. Children are eager to learn from new people and experiences. They absorb all the environment has to offer and it is our responsibility to ensure the world they experience is rich, safe, nurturing, and intelligent. The foundation of self-esteem and all future learning is constructed during these early years and the Programs are designed to take advantage of this powerful, formative period. The Primary program is our fundamental, core Montessori program that runs five days a week (Monday through Friday) from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. The preschool program offers your child a step toward independence in an environment specially created for the developing young learner. This happy and intelligent setting offers your child an opportunity to develop strong social skills as well as explore language, music, practical life skills, art, math, geography, science, culture and large motor activities.

In the Montessori classroom, your child will be introduced to many different concepts and will learn both through observing and through direct interaction with our beautifully crafted materials.

B. The Three Year Cycle

We have found children adjust and access the Montessori environment much more successfully when they attend five days a week. Pre-school aged children especially need consistency. They bond socially more readily with the other children. They also tend to progress through the full spectrum of materials in the five day format. Developmentally it is beneficial for children to experience the full three year cycle. Children move into the extended day program at age four or five depending on their need for a nap.

C. Curriculum

- i. **Practical life.** Dr. Montessori structured exercises for the classroom to help children satisfy the need for meaningful activity. We refer to these as “exercises of practical life.” They include those daily activities which adults perform to

maintain the environment and promote cohesive human relations. The Montessori practical life area is designed to allow the child to practice skills that will lead to greater independence and self-control. This area provides the child with the opportunity to engage in tasks associated with the real world of home, garden, and self-care. This work allows the child to develop concentration and attention to detail. Fine motor skills are honed, as the child gains a sense of satisfaction that comes from completing a task. They develop a deep joy for caring for themselves, others, and their environment. There are four distinct groups of practical life exercises:

- ***Care of the person.*** Children learn hand washing, fastening buttons, zipping, tying, combing, and other personal hygiene skills. First children have to take care of themselves, and then reach out to the environment. We help guide the children to gradually develop independence from their parents.
- ***Care of the environment.*** With these exercises, children take responsibility for the space they use and enjoy. The Montessori classroom is kept clean and tidy and the children are, in large part, responsible for its maintenance. They delight in washing windows, tables and chairs, sweeping floors, dusting shelves, polishing, and gardening. In addition, each child is responsible for returning his/her materials to the shelf upon completion.
- ***Grace and Courtesy.*** Through classroom activities and modeling by teachers, children develop the necessary skills for conversation, conflict resolution, greeting, and thanking. By participating in Grace and Courtesy exercises, children learn to positively interact and to problem solve.
- ***Concentration and Coordination.*** The exercises in practical life are among the first presented. These preliminary exercises include spooning, pouring, using tools, opening and closing bottles, folding and matching. These lessons help the child develop his/her gross and fine motor skills as well as develop concentration. In addition, there are groups of exercises that involve the analysis and control of movement to facilitate coordination. There are exercises that are essentially designed for this purpose, such as walking on the line and the silence game.

- i. **Sensorial Exercises.** Maria Montessori believed that nothing exists in the intellect that was not first experienced in the senses. The materials in the sensorial area are designed to help children sharpen their senses by isolating particular qualities such as size, shape, composition, color, flavor, smell, pitch, texture and weight. Each of the materials in this area is autodidactic and allows the child to work at their own pace with minimal interruption from the teacher. Children enjoy working with these materials repeatedly and often develop their own variations on the standard lesson.

- iii. **Language.** Language is an integral part of the entire Montessori preschool curriculum. Stories, songs, poems along with conversations with adults and peers help children increase their vocabulary and develop oral language skills. Written language is taught through a specific progression of lessons that engage the senses—children learn letters and sounds through seeing, hearing, and touching them—and through immersion in a linguistically rich classroom environment. Children first learn the phonetic sound of each letter. Using inviting, hands-on materials the children progress by classifying objects based on their sounds and then begin putting these sounds together to create words. Once they have learned to create their own words, reading follows quickly. The children work with increasingly more challenging materials. As they progress with their reading, the focus turns to comprehension and grammar. With the development of language, children develop a greater ability to organize their thoughts and express themselves.
- iv. **Mathematics.** The materials in the math area are designed for the development of a concrete understanding of abstract mathematical concepts. The hands on materials in the math area help the child sequentially progress from basic comparisons of different quantities and their numeric symbols, through addition and subtraction and on to the combination of numbers, multiplication, division and fractions.
- v. **Science.** The objective of science in the Montessori classroom is to develop each child’s natural sense of wonder and invite them to find answers to some of their “Why’s”. Each classroom contains many materials with which to explore various aspects of science.
- vi. **Geography and Cultural Studies.** Maria Montessori believed it was important to study what humans have in common to instill in the child a greater sense of belonging to the universe. By examining the similarities and differences of humans around the globe, we build a sense of connection to all human beings. Children in the Montessori classroom

begin by looking at the world as a whole. Children are first introduced to the ideas of air, land, water, and continents. They then begin the study of local regions, cultures, and geography of all the continents. Colorful puzzles provide extensive hands-on exploration of world geography. Boxes containing a variety of items from each continent give the children a concrete link to peoples in other lands.

Students at Kiddie Steps Montessori come from a variety of rich cultural backgrounds. This allows us a unique way to introduce students to other cultures and customs and to study countries in a variety of different ways.



