

# Children's Nest Day School Parent Handbook



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## Our Philosophy

At Children’s Nest Day School, we believe that young children are unique, imaginative and full of interest in the world around them. We believe it is our primary responsibility to help each individual child reach his or her greatest potential. This begins with building a solid set of social-emotional skills, because we know that the ability to relate to others and to care for and be confident in ourselves is the bedrock upon which all other success lies.

Children’s Nest is committed to providing the absolute best early childhood education for young children. We understand that we are preparing children for the variety of experiences ahead of them, not only in school, but in life. Current research in early childhood education and neuroscience teaches us that the best way to do so is to focus on the simultaneous development of the whole child. It is our goal to provide opportunities and support for children’s development within the domains of social-emotional, fine and gross motor, language and cognitive skills. We do this by providing an enriching and intentional environment in which children can wonder, learn, and grow through play. It is through the child’s active and successful dealings with that environment that we help young children achieve optimal growth and development.

At Children’s Nest, we believe that parents are our partners in the education of their children, and we invite regular communication and interaction between parents and teaching staff. We encourage children and families to share their home culture with their class, knowing that we are all enriched by learning about and experiencing the beautiful diversity within our community. Together, we can instill in young children the love of learning, the strong sense of community, and the confidence they need to thrive.

## Curriculum Theory & Goals

Our play-based curriculum is inspired by numerous research-based theories of early childhood development and education:

### *Jean Piaget: Cognitive-Development Theory/Constructivism*

In 1963, Jean Piaget published a study of cognition which proposes that children must take an active role in their own development. Piaget further demonstrates that interaction with the environment and a child’s cognitive organization of experiences results in intelligence. Specifically, this theory emphasizes the fact that a child’s knowledge is constructed gradually through ongoing experiences which, over time, permit the child to develop an expanded understanding of the information gleaned from the experiences. As children grow, they assimilate new information and incorporate it into their existing structure of knowledge. In this sense, children actively construct knowledge through their experiences.

### *Lev Vygotsky: Vygotskian Approach*

Like Piaget, Vygotsky also believed that knowledge is constructed by children themselves. Vygotsky claims that both physical and social interactions are essential for development. Proclaiming the significance of social context, Vygotsky asserts that children learn by first sharing activities with others and then by experiencing on an individual basis. He demonstrates that adults within the child’s social environment – family, school, community, and culture – must play the role of social mediator and must facilitate learning by first determining what each child actually understands. Teachers then provide instruction, intentional materials within the environment, and experiences to scaffold the child’s learning to ever increasing levels of competency.

### *Lucy Sprague Mitchell: Banks Street Model of Education*

Mitchell created a model of education which focuses upon the education of the whole child - including the development of emotional, social, physical, and intellectual skills – through experience-based curriculum.

### **Social-Emotional Skills**

The social-emotional growth of children is the key element of our curriculum because we know that, without strong social-emotional skills, children will not be successful in the world around them. We foster this development by building relationships amongst children and adults through warm, respectful communication and modeling. We help each child develop a strong sense of individual self-worth, and build a community which appreciates the uniqueness of each adult and child. At Children’s Nest, we believe in the value of diversity, and we celebrate the varied backgrounds of our children and families.

### **Physical Skills**

The development of strong fine and gross motor skills is vital to many experiences children will have in their future, both in and out of school (such as sitting at a desk, playing on the playground, participating in sports, riding a bicycle, exercising, drawing, writing, and self-regulation). In our school, we support the development of fine motor skills by providing a variety of hands-on experiences including writing, drawing, cutting, clay-work, painting, and the creation of 3-dimensional art. We also provide a wide variety of sensory-rich experiences, knowing that the more surfaces children touch, the more their sensitivity to texture solidifies and the more their hand-eye coordination increases. Teaching staff incorporate a variety of opportunities to develop their gross motor skills throughout the day by running, jumping, climbing, skipping, dancing, climbing stairs, and hanging from the monkey bars.

### **Language Skills**

Young children develop language skills at a remarkable rate and we provide opportunities to help them do so. We facilitate the growth of spoken language through speaking with the children and through actively encouraging them to speak with each other. We ask for their opinions, model patterns of conversation, ask them questions, and utilize descriptive language to help them begin to label items and feelings. We encourage the development of pre-literacy skills through reading to children regularly, and through making books and the discussion of books an important part of their daily experience.

### **Cognitive Skills**

In today’s world, where Google can answer any question and provide you with any fact, our primary focus is teaching children *how* to think, as opposed to telling them *what* to think. We encourage children to not only ask questions, but to help find the answers themselves. Our goal is to provide experiences in which the children have the ability to physically process information and to create connections in their minds, literally building their own knowledge.

### **Creative Curriculum**

At Children’s Nest, we utilize the *Creative Curriculum*, a play-based curriculum which focuses on exploration and discovery as a child’s primary way of learning, to guide our curriculum implementation. *Creative Curriculum* is research based and helps teachers create high-quality learning environments and experiences rooted in modern best practices. Our classrooms are designed with different centers, specific areas that are clearly identifiable to young children, to help set them up for success in their play.

## **Outdoor Play**

Children's Nest understands the importance of outdoor play for young children. Research has demonstrated that being outdoors not only bolsters children's physical development but also their cognitive development as well. We therefore schedule at least an hour a day for all of our full day classes to be on our playground. In the event that the wind-chill, heat-index or other weather conditions represent a health or safety risk, Children's Nest will limit, switch or cancel time outdoors as needed for the given day.

## **Parent Participation**

Children's Nest believes strongly in collaboration with families. As the most significant adults in a child's life, parents are our partners and we encourage families to volunteer and to participate in all classroom activities, parties, events and field trips whenever possible.

Parents who wish to volunteer need to complete a DCF form, which is available in the office upon request.

## **Communication with Families**

Teaching staff will communicate with families on a regular basis, and in a variety of ways, about their child's experience here at Children's Nest. In the event that parents have questions, concerns or something to share, there are multiple ways to do so. For a brief share, drop off and pick up are great moments for a touch base. For any conversation that will take longer than a few minutes, or which is of a sensitive nature, parents are asked to call their child's teacher during the hours of 12 and 2pm. Lead and Assistant teachers on a teaching team will regularly share information with each other and, when a concern is raised, with the Director as well.

In the event that a concern is not resolved while speaking with the teacher, or if a parent has a concern that they are uncomfortable bringing to the teacher, parents are always welcome to reach out to the Director. Our Directors are always happy to hear from families and are here to help you.

Keeping our parents informed of our happenings is very important to us. We send home newsletters and e-newsletters sharing what we are learning and keeping you up to date on important information. Our infant/toddler classrooms send home daily reports and preschool and VPK send home reports on a regular basis. We have boards and video screens throughout the center listing daily activities and special events.

## **Parent Teacher Conferences**

We hold parent teacher conferences once a year for all children enrolled at Children's Nest. These conferences are a formal time to share information about a child's strengths, opportunities for growth, friendships, and overall experience with us at Children's Nest.

## **Child Guidance**

What is often referred to as discipline, we here at Children's Nest view as a key part of our curriculum. Helping young children develop the skills to behave in both a developmentally and socially appropriate manner is a key piece of our work as educators. We believe that every child deserves to be seen in the highest possible regard and that adults are responsible for actively

supporting their needs. As educators, we believe that every behavior is a message. When challenging behaviors arise, the adults must work together to figure out what isn't working for the child and how we can help.

Our school utilizes a variety of methods to create a safe and positive learning environment for all children.

- We begin with the belief that the physical environment is, in itself, a teacher. When a classroom is calm, organized, developmentally appropriate, and engaging, we have taken the first steps towards setting children up for success.
- Our teaching staff are trained in developmentally appropriate behaviors so that they can set realistic expectations for the specific age group they are teaching.
- Beyond generalized expectations, we also learn about the needs and interests of each child so that we can, from the beginning, provide children with as many of the tools possible to help them be successful.
- We treat children with the respect they deserve at all times because we want them to know they are valued and safe.
- We never shame, humiliate or intimidate children, physically harm or restrain them, or withhold food or other physical necessities.
- We do not use time outs. Children are given the time, space and support they need, without judgment, to self-regulate. We provide a safe space away from others for children to go when they need to "calm down." This is never used as a punitive measure, but rather respectfully allows the child the space and time to prepare to reenter play.
- We never use profane language. We always maintain the highest level of professionalism which includes kind, respectful, and gentle tones when speaking with children.
- Redirection is conveyed in a positive manner: We tell children what they should do ("shovels are for digging") as opposed to what they should not be doing ("don't swing the shovel").
- We use logical consequences as a form of guidance. For example, if a child throws a toy, we gently but firmly require the child to pick the toy up before moving on to play with something else.
- Conflict resolution is dealt with on an individual basis so as to support all children involved.
- We model problem solving skills, helping children learn how to resolve their own interpersonal problems, in an age-appropriate manner, rather than solving the problems for them.

As an absolute requirement, we strictly adhere to following law as written by The Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing Office:

1. *Child care facilities must ensure that age-appropriate, constructive disciplinary practices are used for children in their care.*
2. *Children shall not be subject to discipline which is severe, humiliating, or frightening.*
3. *Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest, or bathroom privileges.*
4. *Discipline shall not involve the denial of active play as a consequence of misbehavior.*
5. *Spanking or any other form of physical corporal punishment is not permitted.*

## Observations, Screenings and Assessments

Teaching staff routinely observe each child's development, including but not necessarily limited to speech, articulation, social-emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical development. These observations occur both formally and informally throughout the year. In addition to the informal observations which happen on a daily basis, the teaching staff utilize the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires* (ASQ), a developmental screening tool used to record developmental progress in children. This helps us identify each child's strengths and opportunities for growth. All students will be assessed using the ASQ within 45 days of enrollment, and annually thereafter. The ASQ may be conducted more than once a year in the event that teacher observations or School Readiness requirements warrant additional screenings. Teaching staff use the information gleaned from the ASQ to inform the individualization of their planning. Individualizing the curriculum goals, the development of classroom management strategies and the creation of strategies for specific children is a central responsibility of teachers. It occurs on a regular basis and is communicated to parents as appropriate.

On occasion, the teacher's observations indicate potential benefit from intervention comprising additional classroom strategies and/or referral for observation by a specialist. In the event that a teacher feels it appropriate based upon observations of a child, the teacher shares observations about a child with the Director. The Director and the teacher establish a plan for further support which may include such steps as further observation, follow up meetings, creating a list of classroom strategies to assist the child, conversation/s with the family, and/or recommendations for observation by a specialist.

If, based on the objective observations of teaching staff, the Director determines an observation by an outside specialist is warranted and would benefit the child, the Director and the teachers will meet with the child's family, share the school's observations, and request permission from the family to have the child observed. Individual children will only be formally observed by outside specialists with the family's written permission. All observations conducted by and communications with outside specialists remain confidential and are shared only with the child's parents and relevant Children's Nest teaching staff and/or employees as detailed in our Confidentiality Policy.

In the event that a child is receiving support services, in order to best support the needs of the child, and so that the school can work together with the parents and the specialist as a collaborative team, the school will ask parents to provide written authorization for the teacher and relevant Children's Nest teaching staff and employees to work directly with specialists. It is the parent's prerogative to decline to provide such authorization, and it is the school's responsibility to accept this decision. Documentation of all observations and meetings between teaching staff, specialists and parents will be kept confidential.

Children's Nest strives to meet the individual needs of every child who attends our school whenever possible. When additional supports are needed, Children's Nest will provide them to the extent that is viable. In the event that Children's Nest determines a child needs one-on-one support in the classroom, it will become the responsibility of the family to cover all costs associated with that support. Anyone providing support to a student in the classroom will report to the lead teacher for guidance while the child is in the classroom. In the event that a family is unwilling or unable to pay for one-on-one support, or any other supports which Children's Nest



determines are needed, Children's Nest has the right, at the sole discretion of the Director, to counsel a family out of the school. In such cases, regular withdrawal policies apply.

## Confidentiality

In order to provide the best learning and social situation for each individual student, the Children's Nest teaching staff, administrative staff, and other employees have access to a great deal of confidential information about students and their families. Children's Nest employees are prohibited from sharing confidential information about students and families with anyone outside of the Children's Nest staff without written authorization from the child's parents, except when required by law. Explicit written permission must be obtained from parents as specified in the Observations, Screenings and Assessments Policy before school teaching staff can speak or work with specialists contracted by the school and/or families to observe and/or work with children.

Employees can and will share confidential information about a child and/or family members, on a need-to-know basis, with the following Children's Nest employees, without additional permission from parents:

- Director
- Teaching staff working with the specific child in question
- Staff specialists
- Administrative staff

## Drop Off and Pick-Up

### Authorized Pick Up List

On our enrollment form, there is a place for you to list the names of individuals who are authorized to pick up your child. This will be verified at time of pick up. If you need to make a change to this list, please do so in writing prior to having the new person arrive at the school. We will NOT release a child until we have written confirmation from the child's parents or legal guardians. Persons picking up your child MUST bring in photo identification. Access to classroom areas is limited to those having a purpose for being there. This is for the protection of children and staff.

### Attendance Records

Upon arriving and departing, your child MUST be signed in and out daily. A child must be left with a staff member upon arrival at the center and a staff member must be notified when a student is leaving.

### Non-Release to Intoxicated Adults

Children's Nest cares deeply about the safety of your children and your family. Our concern prevents us from releasing any child to any individual who is or appears to be intoxicated. We reserve the right to not release a child into this situation and will require another authorized person to pick up the child.

### Custody Documents

If there is a custodial dispute between divorced parents, we must have a copy of the official court documents on file. They must state the custody disposition and allowances.

## Saying Good-Bye / Open-Door Policy

Children's Nest values the participation of parents in our school, both formally and informally. Children's Nest therefore has an open-door policy, meaning that parents are always welcome in their child's classroom.

Children's Nest does ask that parents and teaching staff work together to ensure that a parent's time in the classroom works towards their individual child's success. For example, if a child is struggling with separation in the morning, the teachers may recommend that the parents stay for a brief period to help the child get settled, or they may recommend that the parents say a quick good-bye and make a hasty departure. It is key for both teaching staff and families to understand that the transition from home to school is different for every child and every family. Close collaboration between parents and teaching staff is often the key to a successful transition.

We know initial separation can be hard for families, as well as for children. Young children are very perceptive, and if they sense that their parents are struggling with the separation, this can add to the child's own struggles. We therefore encourage our parents to convey a clear message of confidence to their children – that you know your children will be safe and comfortable, that you are excited for your children, and that they can do this. We are always here to support you as well as your children.

While it may be tempting for parents to sneak out the door when a child is momentarily engaged, doing so is a violation of trust for the child. Children's Nest advises families to always be honest with their children, telling them when the adults are leaving, and reassuring them that someone will be back at the end of the day. Being on time to pick up children at the end of the day supports that trust.

## Comfort Toys / Personal Items

Some children benefit from the support of a special blanket or toy, and we welcome these items into our classrooms. Please be sure to label all personal items with your child's name. Beyond these security toys which help your child be successful, we ask that you not send additional personal items from home (toys, books, etc.) as it can be hard to keep track of multiple items and they can be easily lost or broken. Please never send items of great personal or financial value.

Children's Nest is not responsible in the event that any personal items brought from home are lost or broken.

## Clothing

Children should wear clothes that are comfortable and can get dirty. Shoes and boots should be appropriate for active play including running and climbing, and should keep the children's feet warm and dry for outdoor play. We do not allow open-toed or backless shoes/sandals at Children's Nest.

**LABEL! LABEL! LABEL!** Please label all items that belong to your child and place them in your child's cubby. Children's Nest maintains a lost and found. After a period of time, all unclaimed items are donated to a local charity.

Parents should always pack a complete extra set of clothing, underwear and shoes for their child to have available at school. For children who are toilet training, please pack several complete

outfits so your child can be comfortable even after having an accident (remember – accidents happen and are part of the process!).

## Hours of Operation / Late Fees

Children's Nest opens at 6:30 a.m. and closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for each child left after 6:00 p.m. This fee needs to be paid in cash to the staff member staying late with your child.

## Holidays

Children's Nest is closed on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, we will with close the center the Friday before the holiday and/or the Monday following the holiday.

## VPK Holidays

VPK Holidays generally follow the public-school calendar. See your Director for a calendar for the current year. For those attending the 3-hour class, if you wish to attend on a day when VPK is closed but Children's Nest is open, the cost is assessed based on the daily rate for attendance.

*Please see separate handout for Attendance Policies set forth by the Department of Education.*

## Vacation Allowance

We recognize that families take vacations or have special events where you need to be away. Children's Nest allows for a 2-week vacation allowance per calendar year for each family. You must be enrolled at least six months to be eligible for this vacation allowance. No tuition is due for the 2 weeks you are away. *After that, full tuition is due for any absences, unless you choose to withdraw your child.*

You may separate the weeks if necessary but your child may not attend the center during their allowance weeks. We do not separate vacation time into a daily rate.

It is important to notify the Director when you will be using your allowance weeks. We ask that families provide as much notice as possible to assist our teachers in their planning.

In the event you choose to withdraw your child, another registration fee will be charged upon re-enrollment.

## Meals and Nutrition

Children's Nest in Brandon, Lutz, Northdale, Plant City, Town & Country, and Temple Terrace all participate in the USDA Child Care Food Program (CCFP). We serve 2 snacks and a hot meal to all enrolled children Monday through Friday. Menus periodically include foods representative of a variety of cultures. At these centers, families enrolled in CCFP will be asked to fill out an additional food application form upon enrollment and yearly thereafter. The information requested on these forms is necessary for the centers to be reimbursed for meals served.

All meals and snacks served by Children's Nest meet the meal patterns established by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture. Children's Nest also serves milk to all non-allergic students. Information regarding the CACFP milk guidelines can be found [HERE](#).

Any food that is brought into Children's Nest to be shared among children must be commercially-prepared or prepared in a kitchen that is inspected by local health officials. Food to be shared should be fairly healthy, without a lot of added sugar. Monthly menus are posted in the lobby area and in the classrooms.

Breakfast may be available at an additional charge. See the Director for information regarding cost, serving times and menus.

Parents of children requiring special diets because of food restrictions or allergies need to speak to the Director about providing for the needs of the child. Children's Nest will provide an alternate within the same food group. We have a special Nutritional Agreement Form you must sign. Individual meals brought from home must also meet the meal patterns established by the USDA as noted above.

Handouts on proper nutrition are available in the office or at the parent resource table.

### **Food Safety**

Children's Nest follows appropriate food safety, handling and storage as outlined by the USDA and local Health Department. All staff that handles food must have their Food Handlers Certification.

In compliance with Florida Department of Children and Families requirements, Children's Nest will not serve foods that are identified as choking hazards to children under the age of 4. This includes but is not limited to whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes/sticks and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe. Food for toddlers must be cut into pieces ½ inch or smaller to prevent choking. This applies to all food, even food provided by parents/guardians.

### **Rest Time**

All toddlers and preschool aged children are given two hours of rest time each day. Children's Nest will provide each child with an assigned sleeping mat. We ask that you provide a child size blanket and sheet to be used during rest time. These items will need to be taken home each Friday for laundering.

### **Toilet Training**

Toilet training is a very individualized experience for each child and each family. Children's Nest will collaborate with families to support their children through this process and set them up for success! This is one arena in which the children have much more control than their adults. If a child is not ready, it is not the right time to toilet train, even if the parents are ready. Children's Nest respects the individual needs of our students and will never force a child who is unwilling to use the toilet to do so.

While a child is toilet training, parents should send additional underwear, bottoms and shoes just in case. Accidents happen, and it's ok.

Typically, Children's Nest requires children entering our 3 and 4-year-old classrooms to be toilet trained. In the event that a specific child's needs require flexibility, it is at the Director's discretion to waive this policy.

## Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best defense against disease. Teaching staff teach children to wash their hands by modeling washing all surfaces of the hands for a period of at least 20 seconds (long enough to sing ABC's twice). Children and staff must wash their hands after using the toilet or assisting a child with toileting, upon entering the building, after sneezing or coughing into their hands, before eating or handling food, after dealing with bodily fluids, after handling trash, and at other appropriate times. At Children's Nest we following the following procedure for handwashing:

- 1- Turn on the water
- 2- Get soap
- 3- Wash your palms
- 4- Wash the backs of your hands
- 5- Wash your wrists
- 6- Wash between your fingers
- 7- Wash under your nails
- 8- Turn the water off using a paper towel

Teaching staff may not use hand sanitizer on children. Teaching staff may use hand sanitizer on their own hands if they so desire, but the hand sanitizer must be stored out of the reach of children.

## Diapering

All activities during the day provide opportunities for meaningful communication between adults and children. This includes changing diapers. While changing a child's diaper, teaching staff should interact with the child in a positive manner. Teaching staff may discuss the diapering process, but should be mindful to never make statements which might embarrass the child.

All diapers must be changed in the bathroom using the following procedure:

- 1- Get clean diaper, enough wipes for child's bottom, child's hands, and teacher's hands, change of clothing, diaper cream, bag for soiled clothing and diapers
- 2- Remove clothing and soiled diaper. Soiled clothes are to be treated as bio-hazardous material and must be wrapped in plastic bags to be sent home for parents to launder
- 3- Clean the child thoroughly with wipes
- 4- Place diaper in a plastic bag and place it in a hands-free trash can
- 5- Clean child's hands with a clean wipe
- 6- Put clean diaper and clothes on
- 7- Child and adult wash their hands in accordance with our Hand Washing Policy
- 8- Wash and sanitize diaper area
- 9- Allow child to return to play
- 10- Wash the diapering surface with soap/water solution and dry with a paper towel

- 11- Spray surface with a sanitizing solution of bleach and water and allow to air dry if possible.  
You can dry after 2 minutes with a clean paper towel
- 12- Wash your hands again in accordance with our Hand Washing Policy

Teaching staff must change a child's diaper as soon as possible upon determining that the diaper has been soiled. In addition to having a general awareness throughout the day, teaching staff will check all children in diapers at least every 2 hours to determine if a new diaper is needed.

## Transitioning to a New Classroom

When we feel it is time to transition a child to a new classroom, we will first communicate our intention to the family to ensure that the family agrees it is the right time to do so. We then begin a "visitor program" whereby the child will move up to the next class slowly, getting to know the staff, routine and other children. They might visit for a few mornings and then stay for a few lunch times. Each time they may return to their former classroom and to the level of comfort that makes them feel secure. Our first priority is the well-being of the child.

## Field Trips

On our enrollment form there is a place to provide consent for Children's Nest to transport your child (4-year-olds and up) on exciting and fun field trips. You will be informed as to where we will be going and if there is any additional cost before each trip. You must sign individual permission slips for each trip your child goes on. Children will not be allowed to participate unless a parent has signed the appropriate field trip form. A verbal release is not acceptable.

While some Field Trips are included in the cost of tuition, if there is an additional cost for the field trip you will need to pay in cash and not include it in your tuition check. Children's Nest will reimburse you if you pay and then your child does not end up participating in the field trip.

On field trips we like to take along extra supervision, so if parents are free and would like to come, please do not hesitate to volunteer!

Children must stay with the teacher at ALL times.

If the children need to go to the restroom, staff will ask the group if anyone else needs to go so as to limit the number of bathroom trips when possible.

## Van Rules

- Sit facing forward in your seat at all times
- Seat belts MUST be worn until the van has made a complete stop and driver has said passengers may disembark
- While in the van, quiet voices must be used to ensure the safety of everyone on the van
- When two vans are traveling on a joint trip, they must stay together
- The radio must remain off

## Our Staff

At Children's Nest, we know that the quality of our staff is key to our success. Our teaching staff are the ones on the ground, making the Children's Nest dream a reality every day.

All Children’s Nest staff members have been screened through Child Care Licensing and have completed several law enforcement background checks. Each teaching staff member is required to have a 45-hour training class, which includes a 5-hour segment on early literacy. We require all staff to take Pediatric First Aid and always have staff who are trained in CPR on site. We also have at least one staff member with a Child Development Associates Credential (CDA) or its equivalent for every 20 children under the age of 5. All of our center Directors have completed the Director’s Credential Certification in compliance with the State of Florida’s licensing requirements.

True educators never stop learning, and the field of early childhood education is always growing. We want to be sure our teaching staff are always keeping current with the best practices in our field. All of our staff therefore participate in at least 24 hours of annual professional development in child development, curriculum, and developmentally appropriate practices. To this end, Children’s Nest provides two full day professional development days to all our staff each year. Children’s Nest will be closed to children on these days.

Finally, all of our staff members must love working with children. We respect and accept young children and their families, and always keep our focus on the best interests of the child.

### Two Staff to Open & Close

For the protection of our children and our staff, Children’s Nest requires at least two staff members to be present and in the building each morning before any children can be accepted. In the event that one of the opening staff members is running late, families will be asked to wait until a second staff member has arrived. Children’s Nest will do everything possible to prevent delays in opening. Children’s Nest also requires at least two staff members to be in the building until the last child has been picked up.

### Supervision of Children

Children must be supervised **at all times** and in all areas while they are at Children’s Nest, from the time they are dropped off until they are picked up by an authorized adult. Teaching staff members must coordinate to ensure that they remain within the legal ratios for their class at all times as specified by Florida Statutes Chapter 402 and Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing:

Age of Children	Staff/Child Ratio
1-year-olds	1 to 6
2-year-olds	1 to 11
3-year-olds	1 to 15
4-year-olds	1 to 20
5-year-olds & up	1 to 25

Teaching staff members must be aware of where their colleagues and students are, and must strategically space themselves among the children, both while inside and when outside, so that they can, as a team, both safely supervise all children and productively interact with them.

It is the responsibility of all teaching staff members to not only supervise the children to ensure their safety, but also to be active participants in the play, wonder, and discovery that occurs throughout the day, including on the playground. Teaching staff should help children figure out how to utilize playground equipment, rather than placing children on or removing children from the equipment, and should closely monitor them while on any climbing equipment.

## Registration Fee / Tuition Payment Schedule

Children's Nest has an annual registration/supply fee of \$100. This non-refundable fee is due upon enrollment and covers the cost of insurance and administration.

The first week's tuition payment is due at the time of enrollment, and all following tuition fees are payable in advance for the current week. There is no reduction or discount in tuition for short weeks due to a holiday or absence from illness. If payment is not received by 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, a late fee of \$25 will be assessed. If payment is not received by Thursday, we reserve the right to terminate enrollment. In the event that a family has non-sufficient funds or a check is returned due to account closure or other reasons, the family will be charged a fee of \$25. After the second returned check, the family will be asked to pay in cash for a period of six months.

## Required Forms

Prior to a child's first day at Children's Nest, the family must complete and submit all fields in the Children's Nest Registration Form

Within 30 days of a child's initial enrollment, the family must provide a current yellow DCF 3040 Medical History Form and a blue DCF 680 Shot Record for your child. The DCF 3040 form is available [HERE](#) and both forms are available from your pediatrician.

Children's Nest will provide families with 3 months warning prior to a form's expiration date, and it is the responsibility of the family to provide an updated form prior to the form's expiration.

## Immunizations

In accordance with the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Florida Department of Health Immunization requirements, Children's Nest will not allow children to attend our school who have not received all vaccinations required by the state of Florida for children enrolled in preschool programs. Parents must provide Children's Nest with documentation of full immunization, signed by the child's pediatrician. The only exceptions to this rule are those stated in the above-mentioned Florida requirements, as follows:

- Any child who has incomplete documentation of vaccination for the required number of doses should be admitted after the first dose(s) and issued a Temporary Medical Exemption (DH 680 Form Part B) and scheduled for the next dose(s) according to age and dosage spacing.



- A child who has received as many immunizations as are medically indicated at this time, and is in the process of completing necessary immunizations, may attend only if he/she presents a Temporary Medical Exemption (DH 680 Form, Part B).
- A child who cannot receive one or more vaccines due to medical reasons, should be issued a Permanent Medical Exemption, provided the physician states in writing or in Florida SHOTS the medical basis based upon valid clinical reasoning or evidence, demonstrating the need for a permanent exemption.

In the event that a child is un-immunized or under-immunized in accordance with the above stated clauses, and a local outbreak or epidemic occurs of the diseases for which the child is un-immunized or under immunized, the child may be asked not to attend Children's Nest until the outbreak or epidemic has been declared over.

Children's Nest does not accept Religious Exemptions for immunizations.

### **Activity Permission, Assumption of Risk and Release**

By enrolling a child in Children's Nest, families actively give permission for that child to attend and participate in all aspects of Children's Nest activities, including teaching staff supervised walks in the neighborhoods surrounding Children's Nest. This includes, but is not limited to, utilizing the playground equipment, both indoor and outdoor materials and riding in Children's Nest vans.

Families release Children's Nest, its Board, employees, and agents from all claims, liability, and damages that the family or the child may have for personal injuries or property damage resulting from the child's participation in Children's Nest. This release includes personal injury or property damages caused by negligence, active or passive, of Children's Nest, its Board, employees, and agents; however, the release does not apply to liability for gross negligence, willful injury or fraud, and is not intended to release Children's Nest insurers, if any, or non-agent third parties of any responsibility for any claims that may otherwise be asserted.

### **Withdrawing from Children's Nest**

When it becomes necessary to withdraw your child from Children's Nest, we ask you give us two weeks' notice so that we can prepare classmates for the departure of one of their friends. We may also need to finish any screenings or observations we have been working on. Families may request your child's physical and shot record from the front office on your child's last day so that you can transfer these records to your child's next school.

### **Photography / Social Media**

Children's Nest teaching staff routinely take photographs and videos of enrolled students as a part of our curriculum. These images are used in internal Children's Nest communications, such as class communications and newsletters, and may be displayed in classrooms and the hallways. By accepting admission to Children's Nest, families automatically provide permission for Children's Nest to utilize photos of their child in the above-mentioned fashion.

Children's Nest also routinely utilizes children's images for marketing purposes, including but not limited to, in printed materials, on our website, or on our social media accounts. Families

have the option on our registration forms to actively opt out of having their child's photograph utilized for marketing purposes. All families who do not actively opt out automatically provide Children's Nest with permission to utilize their child's image in marketing materials. Children's Nest will never include a child's name in any marketing materials.

## Child Illness / Wellness

All teaching staff are responsible for monitoring children for signs and symptoms of illness. If a teaching staff member believes a child to be ill, the child shall be removed from the classroom and cared for while awaiting pick up. The teacher should calmly notify the parent or legal guardian as soon as possible. Children's Nest employees do not diagnose, they only report information to the families. For example, employees do not tell parents their child has "a fever," we report to parents the degree of the child's temperature.

### Communicable Diseases

Families must keep a child home and notify the school at once if a child has a communicable disease. Children and adults who contract a contagious illness cannot return to school until the contagious period has ended. In some cases, a note from the doctor will be required before the child or adult can return. Communicable diseases include but are not limited to:

- Strep throat: Child can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics, so long as the child has also been fever-free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye): Child can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotic drops for bacterial pink eye. For viral pink eye, a child can return to school upon written permission from the doctor.
- Coxsackie virus (hand, foot and mouth): Child can return to school upon written permission from the doctor.
- Fifth disease: Child can return to school upon written permission from the doctor.
- Chicken pox: Child can return to school upon written permission from the doctor.
- Head lice: All nits and live lice must be removed from the child's hair, and the child must be treated with an approved treatment system in order for the child to return to Children's Nest.
- Influenza: Child can return to school after being symptom free, without use of symptom reducing medication, for a full 24 hours.

The school will notify the parents of children who may have been exposed, without identifying the individual who is ill.

In addition to these named illnesses, children must stay home if they have any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 or above. Children can return to school following a fever after being fever-free for a full 24 hours without fever reducing medication. A child who leaves school in the middle of the day due to a fever must therefore stay home at least the following day.
- Heavy nasal discharge
- A consistent cough caused by illness (as opposed to Asthma)

- Symptoms of a possible communicable disease — for example: sniffles, reddened eyes, any unusual rash or sores, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain, fever, unexplained rash, etc.
- Vomiting or diarrhea. Children can return to school after vomiting or diarrhea after being completely free of these symptoms for a full 24 hours.
- Clearly not feeling well based on demeanor

If a family suspects a child might be coming down with a communicable disease, the child should be taken to the doctor before returning to school. If teaching staff members suspect a child might be coming down with a communicable disease, or might be suffering from a non-communicable disease which is interfering with the child's ability to have a successful day, teaching staff will contact the family who are then required to come pick up their child as soon as possible, preferably within 30 minutes. In the event that a parent will not be able to pick up a sick child within a reasonable amount of time, parents are asked to arrange for a backup authorized pick-up person to come instead. If needed, Children's Nest will contact the emergency contacts listed on the child's registration forms. A sick child will be kept isolated from the other children in a comfortable setting with a familiar adult. It is always our goal to keep all of the children safe, healthy, and comfortable.

### **Administration of Medication**

Whenever possible, treatment schedules that allow medicine to be given by families outside of school hours are requested and encouraged. Family members and caregivers are welcome to come in to administer medication if needed during school hours.

Only teaching staff who have been trained in Medication Administration can administer approved medication to children. We will only administer medication that is in its original packaging, labeled with the child's first and last name, and accompanied by written orders signed by the child's physician detailing the precise dosage, timing and circumstances under which the medication is to be administered. Parents must sign the Medication Log detailing the name of the medication, the dosage, and time / date at which the medication is to be administered, and the parent's instructions must be consistent with those of the doctor. Children's Nest will not administer the initial dose of any medication except an EpiPen.

Unless otherwise directed by the child's physician, all children with EpiPens must provide the school with **two** current EpiPens to store on site at all times. All unused or expired medication will be disposed of.

Children's Nest requests that any children who take life-supporting medication (ex: insulin) keep a 3-day supply in the school office. In the unlikely event that we had to stay in the school with the children for multiple days, we want to make sure we have the supplies to keep everyone as healthy as possible.

### **Posting of Medical Conditions / Allergies**

At Children's Nest, the safety of our students is our top priority. With this in mind, Children's Nest requests permission to post information about allergies and specific medical conditions which may require treatment during the school day – including specifying the allergy/medical condition, listing symptoms, and describing appropriate treatment/response plan. This information is posted, visibly, in the classrooms so that any adults in the classroom or immediate

vicinity of your child can see it and utilize it if needed. While it our preference to take this precaution, it is a parent's prerogative to keep medical information private if so desired.

## **Screen Time**

Television and video are used in our school only for very specific, educational purposes and for very limited amounts of time. We do not use television for entertainment purposes.

## **Security / Emergency Procedures**

### **Limited Access**

The safety of your child is Children's Nest first priority; therefore, all Children's Nest facilities have limited access and only authorized individuals with a need to be in the building will be granted entry. Parents and authorized personnel only will have codes assigned to them to gain access to our facilities. We ask that parents and other authorized personnel not share their codes with others. Any individual who is not authorized for a code, but will be picking your child up, will need to present photo identification at the office. Prior arrangements need to be made before your child will be released to them.

### **Emergency Drills**

Children's Nest teaching staff and employees practice Fire Drills on a monthly basis with the children, and will practice Inclement Weather, Shelter in Place, and Lockdown Drills with the children at least one time each during the school year. For Inclement Weather drills, we move to the central most part of the school until the inclement weather has passed. A Shelter in Place drill is when we remain indoors due to an external threat such as chemical or biological threats, or an incident in the nearby vicinity. Depending upon the situation, we may continue our functioning within our walls as normal, or we may move to a specific, safe location in the building. A Lockdown Drill is when we hide behind locked doors due to an active threat within the building. Parents will be notified after each Shelter in Place and Lockdown Drill.

These drills are explained to the children in a developmentally appropriate way and are never described by staff as scary. Rather, we tell children that we practice different ways of staying safe in an emergency – sometimes we leave the building to stay safe, and sometimes we stay inside the building to stay safe - so that if there were an emergency, and we do not think there will be, we would be safe. For Lockdown Drills, we tell children that we are going to see how quiet we can be, and that the Director or someone else the children know will come by to knock on the door and try to trick us into making noise – but they won't be able to fool us!

Each classroom has emergency exit posters showing a primary and a secondary emergency route. It is important parents follow the directions given by Children's Nest staff should you find yourselves on site during an emergency drill. Please make sure to calmly evacuate the building or to shelter/hide in place with staff and children. You may re-enter the building or leave the classroom when the all clear is given.

### **Notification of Families in the Event of a School-Wide Emergency**

In the event of an emergency, Children's Nest will first take all possible steps to ensure the safety of the children and the adults in the school, including evacuating to a pre-determined location if necessary. Once Children's Nest leadership determines that all possible steps have been taken to protect members of the community in attendance that day, families will be notified via text,

email, social media, and/or phone calls depending upon the availability of communication devices.

### **Unanticipated Closings**

The Director may choose to close the center in the event of hazardous weather or a loss of power, heat or water. Parents will be notified by phone if the center closes unexpectedly during regular school hours. Children's Nest may close when Hillsborough County Board of Commissioner closes government offices and the public schools close for dangerous weather conditions. In the event schools close for emergency shelter preparation, Children's Nest may or may not remain open.

### **Medical Emergencies**

In the event that a child experiences a medical emergency, either illness or injury, which we believe requires emergency medical treatment, we will first contact 911, and then we will contact the child's parents or designated emergency contact. If we are unable to reach parents or designated emergency contacts, we will call the child's physician and/or arrange for immediate emergency treatment. By enrolling a child in Children's Nest, families authorize the school to obtain medical care for their child in the event of a medical emergency, including transportation for medical care and any medical care determined appropriate by medical personnel.

On our enrollment form we ask for parent's insurance carrier and the policy number. It is important families report any information changes immediately. We carry student accident insurance on each of our students. This is primary-type insurance. *It covers accidents to children on the premises and on school field trips, and will pay first before the parent's insurance.* Parents must bring itemized bills to the Director and they will be submitted. Families are responsible for payment of all medical services rendered that are not covered by our student health plan.

For all injuries or incidents, employees will complete, and parents will be asked to sign, a DCF Accident and Incident Report that details what happened and how Children's Nest staff responded to the accident or incident.

Children's Nest will notify families of any injuries sustained above the neck. We leave it to parent's discretion as to whether a child should see the physician. If a child ever loses consciousness for any amount of time because of a head injury, or any other reason, 911 will be notified and then we will notify the parents.

In the event that one child injures another, the parents of both children will be notified of the incident. At no time will a Children's Nest employee inform a parent of the other child's identity as doing so would be a violation of that child's confidentiality rights.

### **Child Abuse Reporting**

All employees of Children's Nest are Mandated Reporters, meaning that they are required to report any and all suspicions of child abuse to protective services. Employees do not need permission from the Director or anyone else to make such a report if the employee feels it is warranted.

## Smoking, Drugs, Alcohol & Weapons Prohibition

To protect the health and safety of all employees, parents, and students,

- smoking and vaping
- narcotics, alcohol, and other impairing drugs/paraphernalia
- firearms and weapons

are all strictly prohibited within the confines of Children's Nest, including the playground the parking lot, personal automobiles in our parking lots, and Children's Nest vehicles.

## Parent Referral Program

Any family that refers another family to Children's Nest will receive a credit of one week's tuition on their account.

## Voluntary Preschool Program (VPK)

Children's Nest participates in the 540-hour Hillsborough County Voluntary Preschool Program.\* Children eligible for this class must be 4 years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>. Depending on the location, classes will either run from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, or from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. for 180 days. A nutritious snack will be served during the morning but no lunch. Extended hours are available at an additional cost. The preschool program is sponsored by the Hillsborough County school system. You must sign up through the Early Childhood Coalition to participate in this program. Please see the Director for more information. Our learning program continues throughout the entire day not just during the morning session.

\*Should the State of Florida lose funding for this program, parents will be responsible for the weekly tuition payment if they wish to remain in the special VPK class.

## Aftercare and Transportation

Children's Nest picks up school age children from local elementary schools in our service area. The children come back to the center where they are served a snack and then engage in organized play both inside and outside. We have supervised homework time Monday through Thursday.

Our vans are equipped with age-appropriate safety restraints and first aid supplies. Every van driver must have a current driver's license, annual physical and first aid/CPR training.

On school holidays and during the summer, we plan fun field trips and outings for the school age children such as skating, movies, visits to county parks, etc.

*There is no additional fee for your child to attend when we pick up your child after a half day in their primary schools, but a fee will be charged for extra entire day holiday attendance.*

## Parent Notifications

### Know Your Child Care Facility

Every family receives the "Know Your Child Care Facility" brochure upon enrollment. Families can also access this brochure electronically [HERE](#).

## **Influenza**

In the months of August and September, Children's Nest will provide families with information about Influenza as required by Florida Statute 402.305. Families can also access this brochure electronically [HERE](#).

## **Leaving Your Child in the Car**

In the months of April and September, Children's nest will provide families with information about the risk of distracted parents accidentally leaving their children in their car during the day, as required by Florida Statute 402.305. Families can also access this brochure electronically [HERE](#).

## **Rilya Wilson Act Compliance**

Children's Nest will comply with all requirements under the Rilya Wilson Act for any child under court-ordered protective supervision or out of home care. Information about the Rilya Wilson Act can be found electronically [HERE](#).