



# St. Christopher's Montessori School Parent Handbook

2024/2025

St. Christopher's Montessori School  
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Dear Parents,

We wish to extend a very warm welcome to all the students and parents at St. Christopher's Montessori School. We are committed to providing the best possible Montessori learning experience for each child entrusted to our care. To facilitate the educational program, we are pleased to offer this parent handbook. The purpose of the parent handbook is to better acquaint parents with our Montessori philosophy and principles and with the operations of the school. It is hoped that the contents of this handbook will assist you and your child in making your time at St. Christopher's a successful, happy, and positive experience.

All parents are expected to be familiar with the school guidelines and policies listed within and to abide by them.

Sincerely,

The Board and Staff of St. Christopher's Montessori School

## St. Christopher's Mission Statement

Our children's schoolhouse provides a nurturing Montessori Community dedicated to educating the whole child: heart, mind, and body.

## St. Christopher's Values and Philosophy

St Christopher's Montessori School creates a warm and secure environment in a home-like setting. Our school is especially designed to meet the needs of young children. During their three years here, children develop a foundation of social and cognitive skills upon which they build the person they will become. At St. Christopher's we foster independence, love of learning, and respect for self, others, and the environment. Our Montessori curriculum shapes an individualized program for each child according to their own interests, learning style, and natural pace. Our children learn that school is the place where they succeed and have fun!

## The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method way of learning involves five key elements:

**Respect** for the child

**The Absorbent Mind** of the child - learning through the senses

**Sensitive Periods** - now more commonly known as 'windows of opportunity.'

**The Prepared Environment** - giving children the freedom to explore activities of their choice

**Auto Education** the concept that children can educate themselves

## Society Legal Structure

St. Christopher's Montessori School is operated under the auspices of the Queenswood Montessori Society. The society is a non-profit organization, registered as a Charitable Trust under the Societies Act of BC. Our school is owned and operated by the parents who pay annual dues.

## History of St. Christopher's

The school was established in 1969 and operated by two Sisters (Sisters of St Ann) from the Queenswood House of Studies on Arbutus Road near the University of Victoria. When they decided to retire in 1978, parents who did not wish the school to close created the Queenswood Montessori Society, purchasing the present school buildings in 1978. The school buildings were originally a local elementary school called St Christopher's and built in the early 1900s. Later the school was converted into a dance studio before reverting to the school we know today in 1978. A major addition of the school buildings was undertaken in 1988, when the Buttercup Room was added.

Every year further upgrades to the building and grounds continue with the support of our annual fundraiser.

## School Operating Hours

### Regular School Hours

Room	AM	PM	Full Day
Fireplace Room	8:15 – 11:15	12:15 – 3:15	8:15 – 3:15
Buttercup Room	8:30 – 11:30	12:30 – 3:30	8:30 – 3:30

- **We ask that you stay with your child** until the classroom door is opened and your child is safely inside the room and greeted by the teacher.
- To avoid traffic congestion in the hallways, we have staggered start times for the two rooms.

### Before/After-School Care

The School does offer an early morning drop-off option (8:00 – 8:30 a.m.) and an extended end of day pick-up option (3:15 – 3:45 p.m.) However, for it to be financially viable there needs to be a minimum number of families signed up. This minimum varies from year to year.

Please contact the office for information on availability and fees.

### Parental Involvement and Commitment

Parent involvement and commitment to the Montessori philosophy is encouraged and welcomed at St. Christopher's. Areas where you can get involve include:

- Serving on the Board of Directors (board members are nominated and voted in at the AGM scheduled in October of each School Year)
- Volunteering and participating at the various school events (Cultural Day, Fun Day, Oak Bay Parade, etc.)
- Volunteering with the annual Spring fundraiser
- Coming out to parent events, including Parent Education evenings and pub nights

You will be notified of events through:

- E-Mails (primary means of notification)
- Whiteboard notices at the front entrance

Involvement builds community spirit and can be a wonderful way to make new friends!

## The Montessori Program

St. Christopher's offers a Montessori Primary program for children aged three to five years old, including a full day program. Three and four-year-old students attend half-day morning or half-day afternoon class. School-aged students attend a full-day program.



Since 80% of mental development takes place before a child is eight years old, quality education during this period is critical. In the Montessori tradition, each classroom is a prepared environment alive with a wealth of intriguing materials. The child moves at their own pace through all areas of the classroom – Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics and Science. The teacher's job is to observe and guide the child as natural development unfolds. The Montessori Primary program was developed to meet the specific and changing needs of the child.

## Grace Period for all children

There is a six-week probationary period for all new children enrolled at the school. This gives the school and parents the opportunity to see if the child is emotionally and socially ready, engaged in the Montessori environment, and therefore ready for learning.

## Requirements

St. Christopher's Montessori School is licensed by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care. We follow the BC curriculum guides in: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and Physical & Health Education. St. Christopher's enhances a students' learning experiences by augmenting these outcomes with the unique Montessori curriculum.

Our school is licensed through Island Health as a group day care for children 30 months to school age. Island Health now comes under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Child Care. As per the Montessori philosophy, our classes run with 3, 4 and 5-year-olds in the same program.

## Staffing

St. Christopher's is fortunate to have highly qualified staff who bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the school. All teachers are Montessori-trained and have either their full ECE (Early Childhood Educator) Certificate or Assistant Status. Many teachers also hold their BC teacher's certification or Independent teacher's certification. In addition to the above qualifications, all staff members have first-aid training. We also have specialist teachers for Music, Art and French. The teachers' enthusiasm and dedication to the ongoing care and education of the children is impressive.

## Active Citizenship

Through various community projects, students at St. Christopher's experience a sense of personal and collective responsibility, as well as the gratification of doing something thoughtful and meaningful for others. In recent years for example, students have visited a local senior living residence to share songs and crafts. During Covid the children made thoughtful Valentine's cards for these seniors. Families and children contribute annually to the Mustard Seed Food Bank.



St. Christopher's encourages the spiritual development of the child in an atmosphere of respect and caring. We encourage children to treat others with care and kindness, just as they would like to be treated.

## Art at St. Christopher's



The major goal of the art program is to permit and encourage each child's creative drive and pleasure in his or her own process. Creativity marks an individual response to life that can be fostered, but not taught.

The program involves exploration with a wide variety of media, techniques, and colour, while reinforcing Montessori principles. Children participate once a week with our Art specialist in the dedicated art room.



## Music at St. Christopher's

Music classes are held once a week. The children are introduced to the basic elements and fundamentals: pitch, pulse, rhythm and learning to sing in tune. Children participate in small groups, enabling each child to have one half-hour session per week.

## **French at St. Christopher's**

French is introduced to all the children on a weekly basis within the classroom setting with our French specialist. The emphasis is on vocabulary building through themes, songs, books, and conversation.

## **Child Pickup and Drop Off**

The School will only release your child to caregivers whose names have been registered at the office. At the start of the school year, please register on the Student Information Form the name, address, and phone number of anyone who will regularly be picking up your child. Temporary permission may be granted by filling in a 'permission slip', these are located outside each of the classrooms. 'Pick-up sheets', located at the exit doors of each classroom, should be filled in daily with an initial by the person doing pick up – this is a mandated requirement.

## **Parent Communication**

At St. Christopher's, we believe in regular communication. An integral part of a parent's involvement in their child's education is through effective communication with the School. The school has an 'open door' policy so should you have any immediate concerns please don't hesitate to touch base with the teachers in your child's classroom.

As previously stated the main mode of communication is via e-mail. Regular updates are sent out to inform parents and staff about upcoming events and pertinent news. The whiteboard at the front door is also a primary method of communication that parents should get in the habit of reading daily.

## **Parking Guidelines**

Parking is available on Newport Ave and Currie Road. The Oak Bay Police have asked us to please park properly – observing 'no parking' by yellow curbs, not blocking driveways or crosswalks, and not turning around in our neighbours' driveways. Parents are also asked not to park in front of the dental offices on Currie Road. We also urge you to use the crosswalk with your child should you need to park on the opposite side from the school – remember children watch and learn by your example. The small school parking area at the front of the school is for staff use only.

## School Schedule

At St. Christopher's we generally follow the public-school board policy for holidays. Several non-instructional days are scheduled throughout the year. Children will not be in attendance on those days. The School closes approximately one week earlier than the elementary school system in June. Staff devote these days to class clean up, meetings and material making.



## Parent Code of Conduct

We are very proud of our school community. We do ask that parents observe the following as good decorum:

- Treat their children and other children with respect both verbally and physically.
- Treat each staff member with respect.
- Treat each other with respect on school grounds.
- Use a soft voice while inside the school.
- Refrain from using inappropriate language. There are many ears listening.
- If you have a conflict with a staff member, parent, or student, please take it to the Principal immediately. Any misunderstandings can be cleared up through the office. Unsubstantiated gossip undermines the professionalism of the School and can be harmful to the community at large.
- Smoking and vaping tobacco or marijuana are strictly prohibited inside the school or on or near school property.
- Children will not be released to parents who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure Student Information Forms are kept updated with correct addresses and lists of emergency contacts.

## Attendance

Good attendance and arriving on time are vital to the overall learning process and is an essential element that promotes successful integration for the child. It is the responsibility of parents to inform the School by phone or email if their child is unable to attend or is delayed for any reason, preferably ahead of time. Attendance is taken in the classrooms daily and students who are absent or late need to be recorded in the attendance book.

## Punctuality

A sense of order and punctuality is consistent with Montessori learning. We strongly encourage parents to ensure that their child arrives on time each day. A student arriving late for class may be both disruptive and distracting to the ongoing learning process and will find it difficult to settle into the session. Children who are consistently late may miss out on valuable topics and materials being introduced.



## **Toileting**

We expect all children to be fully toilet trained before entering St Christopher's. We have 3 teachers to 25 children in each class and it can be disruptive to the learning process of others when one of the teachers is called away to take care of a toileting concern. Ongoing issues can lead to stress and anxiety for the child and turn it into a negative experience.

We understand that accidents do happen from time to time, especially in the first few weeks of school for new children, but if a child regresses or is not truly toilet trained when they start with us, the classroom teachers will consult with the parents to work on a solution. In extreme cases when a remedy cannot be found we may ask that the child have a shortened day or stay home until they are successfully toilet trained. If this should happen staff will work closely with the parents to ensure a positive and successful return to school.

Teacher do not assist with wiping, instead they will prompt the child on how to wipe themselves and how to dress in dry clothing. If the child is unable to adequately wipe themselves or if they are soiled from a bowel movement the parents will be called to assist.

Diapers and pull ups are not allowed at the school.

## **Child Guidance / Harassment and Bullying Prevention**

St Christopher's Montessori School believes that all children have the right to learn in a safe, caring and orderly environment with a focus on physical safety, social connectedness, inclusiveness and protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of a child's gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

St Christopher's approach to behaviour guidance is to assist children in developing self-control, self-confidence, and ultimately self-discipline and sensitivity in their interactions with others. The School's approach to discipline is positive, pro-active and consistent with the developmental age and stage of each child. All children participate in lessons of "Grace and Courtesy". The four and five-year-old children are encouraged to act as mentors to the younger children. They also participate in the "Second Step" program; an empathy-based program which builds awareness of others needs and helps children to develop impulse control and anger management skills.

We encourage acceptable behaviour such as being respectful to ourselves, to others, and to school property and learning to follow school rules such as walking calmly when inside and staying in designated areas. Unacceptable behaviour can consist of but is not limited to: fighting (or play fighting), lack of respect for others, teasing, throwing objects and running in the hallways. This applies while at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school environment.

The consequences of unacceptable behaviour will be applied in a fair and consistent manner, will respect an individual's right, and consider their age, maturity and special needs, if any. Consequences will be restorative rather than punitive.

St Christopher's Montessori will take all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of the policy.

The School is fully compliant with the British Columbia's Community Care and Assisted Living Act and specifically with the Child Care Licensing Regulation Division 2 - "Guidance and Treatment of Children". We also follow the principles of the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia's "Code of Ethics". Copies of these can be found on our website.

### **Separation**

Separation is a process we go through all our lives. Though often challenging and exciting, this growth towards independence can be painful and scary, especially for young children. Parents and teachers working together collaboratively show children that they trust and believe in one another. This offers a foundation of support when the world suddenly seems a new and different place.

Independence is one of the key Montessori philosophies goals, but many children have second thoughts about being away from their family initially. We do encourage a quick drop off but realize that the transition from parent to teacher can sometimes be challenging. Remember that sometimes staying only makes it more difficult for your child as well as for yourself. We encourage parents to remain in the Parent Room a few minutes while the teachers settle their child or to call the School once at home or at work to see how they are doing. Please don't leave without letting your child know that you are going.

### **Special Needs**

If your child has special learning or medical needs, please discuss with the principal. A student who may show additional needs after starting school may require a professional assessment. Parents and staff will work together to determine the best course of action to help with the child's success. Should the school recommend a psycho-educational assessment be necessary for a child transitioning into Full days at St Christopher's, parents will be responsible for any costs involved.

During the application process we ask that parents disclose if their child is being assessed for special needs, or if at any time another program has suggested that their child may benefit from an assessment. We support the inclusion of all students regardless of their abilities and we recognize that some children may need extra support in the classroom to facilitate their learning. However, we are a small school and do not have the resources nor can provide the services that other, larger schools can. Students with special needs often require a teacher's aide and staff may need extra time to modify the program for an individual. Demands on classroom staff with the addition of a child with special needs is ongoing. While with one individual this demand may be manageable, in another it may be beyond the scope of resources we have available.

### **Illness**

We understand that parents may choose to bring their children to school even with a mild sickness. However, we have an obligation to ensure a healthy environment for all.

If a child has a bad cold with a runny nose or a cough and comes to school, the chances are that other children and staff could also contract the cold. Germs have the potential to spread quickly in the school environment. With your cooperation we can establish a healthier environment for everyone if, when your child is sick, they remain at home. We will refer to our St Christopher's Communicable Disease Plan (August 2021) for illness related to COVID-19.

**Please Note: If we see that your child is not feeling well, we will call you to pick them up.**

Below is a general list of illnesses that would prevent your child from being allowed to attend school as well as a general guideline for St. Christopher's teachers to call you to pick up your child from school.

- A fever exceeding 38°C or 100°F
- An infection for which the child has not been on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours.
- A child vomiting or complaining of severe headaches or stomach aches.
- A child who has diarrhea.
- A child who has been constantly coughing or has a runny nose, particularly green-coloured discharge.
- A communicable disease such as pink eye or head lice. The School's policy around the five most common childhood communicable diseases of pink eye, fifth disease, head lice, pinworms and hand, foot and mouth disease can be found on our website. Parents are required to notify the School immediately if their child contracts a communicable disease.

**Please Note: We ask that parents keep their child home until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours.**

### **Medical Information**

It is important for the school to have all relevant medical information at hand to ensure the safety of your children including:

- **Full Disclosure:** Parents must fully disclose all medical information about the child during registration (information as specified in the medical section of the application and/or registration form). Disclosure is vital so that the School can take any medical precautions as becomes necessary – such as requiring an EpiPen be kept in the classroom for a child with a severe nut allergy.
- **Up-to-Date Information:** Should a child undergo a medical procedure or treatment after registration, parents are required to inform the School so that changes to medical information can be amended and a medical plan implemented if deemed necessary.
- **Immunization:** At St. Christopher’s an up-to-date immunization record is required for all newly enrolling children.

If a child’s caregivers have chosen not to have their child vaccinated:

- a) The School will provide the family with a guide from the public health unit that explains the benefits of immunization and risks of not vaccinating
  - b) The School will keep a log to confirm that the parent has received a copy of the guide
  - c) The family is advised that in the event of an outbreak, or an immediate threat of an outbreak, the child will need to temporarily stay home from school to protect their child from becoming ill and prevent the spread of the disease
- **Student Medication:** Staff should be notified of any prescription or non-prescription medication a child is taking. In the case where staff may be required to administer medication, please complete a “Permission to Administer Medication” form, copies of which can be found at the office and hand to a classroom teacher.
  - **Allergies:** Parents must notify the School of any allergies and if/when any new allergies or physical condition arise. Emergency medications such as an EpiPen or puffer must be kept on premises for those children prescribed them for severe and life-threatening allergies. These are labelled and kept safely out of reach of other children in the classroom, but easily accessible to staff should they need to be administered. Parents are responsible for ensuring such medications are up to date.

### **Inclement Weather**

The children are taken outside as part of the daily routine. Each child is expected to have a two-piece rain set (pants and jackets) kept at their boot box – please avoid a one-piece as these are more difficult for children to put on independently. Waterproof boots are also required for rainy days.

In the event of extraordinary inclement weather conditions such as snow, whether unanticipated or where prior knowledge of such conditions are received through meteorological announcements, classes at St. Christopher’s Montessori may be cancelled. The School will make every effort to inform parents as early as possible of any cancellation of classes through a group email.

Parents are asked to ensure that they have a reliable backup plan should an emergency prevent them from picking up their child on time. Fees will NOT be reduced due to closures caused by extreme weather conditions.

### **Clothing and Possessions**

We ask that you send your child to school in clothing **free of violent and commercial logos; we discourage superheroes and princesses as it can affect a child's behaviour!** Please ensure that they are dressed appropriate to the weather and with clothing that they can easily put on and off themselves. As previously stated, we encourage independence in all areas of a child's life.

A second set of clothing should be kept inside the drawstring bag provided by the school and left at the school full time in case of "mishaps". Please remember to bring a spare set of clean clothes if the previous ones were taken home to be washed. All clothing should be labeled with your child's name.

### **Indoor / Outdoor Shoes (Boots)**

All children must have a pair of shoes for indoor use as well as a pair of outdoor shoes and, as previously stated, a pair of boots for the playground. This will help maintain a clean school environment. Those shoes/boots not in use are stored neatly in the child's own boot box.

### **Observation Time**

An excellent way to become familiar with the Montessori approach is to observe the teachers and the children interacting in the classroom. The classrooms are open for observations from October to May. There is a sign-up calendar outside the classrooms to reserve the specific time and day.

An "observation" chair will be provided so all the activities can be viewed. We request that you, "the observer," remain seated and do not participate in the classroom so that children are able to continue with their activities and you will get a clearer picture of what is taking place. Please remember to check in with a teacher before entering your child's classroom. Both parents and teachers have found that **20 minutes** is the optimum amount of time for successful observation of their child.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

All children are recognized close to or on their birthday with a "birthday circle". A week or two before the special date parents will receive an invitation to attend with suggested times for the birthday circle celebration.

Parents are welcome to participate and take photographs/videos of their child on this day, please be mindful that other families may not wish for their child to be photographed.

## Snacks

Parents are responsible for providing snack for their child each day. We ask that you provide nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables and cheese packed in a small reusable container. Please refrain from sending high fat or sugary treats such as cookies, chocolate, or chips.

**\*Due to allergies, products made with any nuts are strictly prohibited in all areas of the school including outside in our playground after sessions.**

**Full-Day student lunchtime** is a quiet, social time when good manners and polite conversation are encouraged. The children participate in setting the table, preparing for lunch and tidying up after lunch. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the lunch provides approximately one third of the child's daily nutritional requirements.

## Photography Policy

Photos are taken through the school year to communicate celebrations, activities, and achievements. Should you not wish to have your child's photo posted within the school, please advise the principal in writing. Likewise, if you are taking photos of your child on school grounds, please refrain from posting photos with other children on social media websites (i.e. Facebook or Instagram).

## School Calendar

The current school calendar will be issued and is posted on our website in August. It is our policy to notify parents in advance of all events, trips or visits planned by the school. Please check the school calendar regularly for holidays, Parent-Teacher Interviews, Professional Development Days and other special events.

All pre-planned school events will be highlighted on the School Notice Board (white board) in advance as well as through daily parent-teacher interaction for all to note that the School is preparing for such an activity.

## Non-Instructional Days

Non-Instructional Days are for the teachers to attend workshops, seminars, or for collaborating and sharing new ideas. Children do not attend school on these days and parents must make alternate arrangements for their child's care.

## Guests

Given the busy nature of the average school day, unexpected visits to the school are not encouraged. An appointment may be made with the principal to schedule a visit to tour the school premises.

### **Items from School**

Many of our classroom materials consist of small attractive objects that are appealing to children. If you find any "mysterious objects" in your child's possession, please return them to the School. It may be part of a larger set belonging to a puzzle or other "set" of materials. These sets can be expensive to replace and often impossible to replace individual parts.

### **Change in Information**

Should your email address, telephone number or address at home or place of business change, please notify the School immediately. Any emergency contacts that should be added or changed should be updated.

### **Student Progress: Evaluation and Reporting**

Student evaluation and informal parent reporting is an ongoing process throughout the year at St. Christopher's. Students are continually evaluated in a variety of different ways in order that they may demonstrate their unique and individual strengths. For children new to the school, a "First Impressions" report takes place during the first and second week of October. This is a verbal report, often in the form of a telephone call, and the purpose is for the teacher to communicate to the parents their impression of how the child has settled into the school year.

Parents are invited to attend scheduled parent/teacher interviews twice a year for ALL CHILDREN. These interviews are a valuable opportunity for staff and parents to exchange ideas and observations, discuss concerns, and review the unique development of each individual child. All-Day school aged children receive written reports each term.

### **Graduation Tea**

A Graduation Tea is held each June for the school-aged children. Diplomas, memory books and other special items are presented during this unique celebration. It is a very special and much anticipated event, commemorating the three years that these children have attended St. Christopher's.

### **Tax Receipts**

Tax receipts will be issued in February for the previous taxation year.

### **PST / GST**

No PST/GST is charged on school fees paid by parents.

### **Accidents/Incidents**

All accidents/incidents involving children are documented at the school.

### **In case of a Minor Accident or Incident:**

The child/ children will be tended to immediately by a staff member. Appropriate first aid will be administered if necessary (soap and water and/or an icepack, bandage), or comfort and support given should that be more appropriate. It will then be shared with the caregiver picking up the child that day as well as being documented in the classroom communication book and/or on a “St Christopher’s Incident Report Form” which is kept on file for the School year.

#### In case of a Serious Accident:

- The child will be tended to immediately by a staff member who will ascertain the extent of the injury, begin first aid if it is appropriate and inform the Principal as soon as possible through another staff member
- Parents/ caregivers will be notified
- For serious injuries, the teacher and/or Principal will also call 911. (Parents will be expected to assume responsibility for any expenses incurred.)
- Should the child need to go to the hospital and parents cannot be reached, he/she will be accompanied by a staff member who will take along all their necessary medical information; care card number, family doctor etc.

#### **Fires, Earthquakes and other Major Disasters:**

- St Christopher’s has an Emergency Preparedness Plan as well as an Emergency Procedures Flowchart, which addresses the procedures staff would take in the event of a fire or bomb threat, a minor or major earthquake (including tsunami), a Lock Down or a major weather event. Both the Emergency Preparedness Plan and the Emergency Procedures Flowchart are available for viewing on our website.
- The children do practice fire drills once a month and earthquake drills once a year. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is practiced at least once each year by the teachers.
- **We ask that you DO NOT phone the School.** Phone lines must be kept open for emergency calls.
- **TUNE into local radio station CFX 1070** using a battery-operated radio or car radio for information and direction.
- **ESTABLISH an out-of-area contact person.** Phone service will likely be limited during a major disaster. It may be much easier to phone someone outside the region than to contact someone locally.
- **Electronic Mail** may serve as a means of communication.
- **Epipens and Emergency Medication.** Time and safety permitting staff will do their best to ensure that epipens or other emergency medications are taken with them during an evacuation.
- **Identification Bracelets** from earthquake kits will be placed on each child’s wrist. The bracelet gives basic information about the child. **Please notify the school of any changes.**



## School Governance, Policies and Procedures

### Licensing and Funding

Queenswood Montessori Society is licensed to operate as “St. Christopher’s Montessori School” under the Community Care Facilities Act by the Province of British Columbia, Childcare Facilities Licensing Board. We are licensed as a group day-care.

Our funding comes from the following sources:

- Tuition and Registration fees
- Grants (Ministry of Education and the Childcare Operating Fund Program)
- Donations
- Fundraising
- Investment income.

### Charitable Donations

As St. Christopher's Montessori School is a non-profit society, financial donations to the School are deductible as charitable donations.

### Governance

At the Annual General Meeting held each year, the members of the St. Christopher's Montessori Society elect a Board of Directors to oversee the operations of St. Christopher's. The Board of Directors is made up of parents at the School; representation from both rooms and morning and afternoon programs is optimum. The Principal is solely responsible for the daily operations of the School. The Board's role is to set the policies for the Principal, set the vision and strategic plan for the school, fundraise, and evaluate the Principal's performance. Board meetings occur monthly and the minutes of the meetings are available to the parents.

### Enrolment Process

The following is the general outline of our enrolment process. St. Christopher's Montessori accepts children in the following priority sequence:

1. Current Students and New Siblings (of St. Christopher's alumnae)
2. Children of staff of St. Christopher's Montessori School
3. Children transferring from another Montessori School
4. New Enrollees
- 5.

Prospective parents will be invited to tour the school upon their application, to get a good understanding of the school's philosophy and to see if it is a good fit for their child. St. Christopher's is a 3-year Montessori program. To place a child in the waiting pool an application form and fee must be completed. This process is available online. There is no formal interview process, but as previously stated we do conduct a school tour upon application. gender and age of child (to maintain a good balance in the classrooms) and “readiness” will be considered. “Age” for registration purposes is the age on December 31 of the year the child

starts school. Three-and-four-year old's attend for half day. School aged children stay for a full day.

*A complete application for enrollment includes the following items:*

- Completed enrolment form that has been signed and dated
- Copy of immunization records (required to be up to date)
- Copy of birth certificate
- Signed Parent Handbook Agreement
- Records request (when applicable)
- Any applicable fees/deposit

*Admission Requirements (Casa Program, 2 ½ years to 6 years)*

- Completed application form
- Application fee paid
- School tour
- Child must be at least 36 months old by December 31<sup>st</sup> of school year or upon enrolment
- Children must be toilet trained and weaned
- A child must be able to follow simple instructions

*NOTE: Exceptions for those with birthdays between September 2 and December 31 are based on evaluation and approval by school administration.*

Vacancies are filled from the wait list in accordance with the priority enrollment process, as previously outlined, in conjunction with the date of application.

### **Returning Students**

Parents of existing students are asked to re-register for the new school year in January. A non-refundable deposit is required to reserve the space, which will be a pre-payment for their June tuition.

New parents will receive an acceptance letter along with details of the deposit and automatic withdrawal forms to be completed. Requests for morning or afternoon spots will be accepted and placed in order of the application date.

### **Additional Needs**

If your child has special learning or medical needs, please discuss with the Principal. A student who may show additional needs after starting school may require a professional assessment. Parents and staff will work together to determine the best course of action to help with the child's success. Should the School recommend a psycho-educational assessment be necessary for a child transitioning into Kindergarten at St Christopher's, parents will be responsible for any costs involved.

## Classroom Placement

The final decision for classroom placement is made in the best interests of the child by the school staff. Parents who have information relating to this decision should submit their request in writing to the principal. Any changes in classroom assignments will be made at the discretion of the principal.

## Concerns and Issues Resolution

If any parent wishes to clarify or discuss any matter or concern about the School or their child, the following guidelines should be followed:

Issue/ Concern	Contact
-your child's educational needs	-one of the teachers in your child's class
-your involvement with an individual teacher	-the staff person directly (using discretion as to time and place.)
-general educational matters or concerns about class environment	-Principal
-personnel issues in general	-Principal
-financial matters	-Principal and/or office administrator
-buildings and grounds	-Principal
-overall functioning of the school	-Principal
-Board of Directors	-Chair of the Board
-registration and enrolment	-Principal and/or office administrator

## Appeals Policy

- If a concern is not addressed satisfactorily with the teacher(s) involved, following the above guidelines, the Principal will make every attempt to solve the matter at the school level.
- If the parent feels that the matter has not reached a satisfactory conclusion, the parent should present the matter, in writing, to the Board.
- If a concern is in regard to the Principal, the matter should be presented in writing to the Board. The Board will contact all parties involved and after careful consideration, will resolve the matter.

## Custody Issues

Should there be custody issues:

- The school must have legal papers of visitation schedules and any other relevant legal documents, including restraining orders, etc.
- If there are no legal papers, the office will accept a written agreement signed by both parents.

- Each parent has a right to receive school mail, speak to teachers, go to interviews, receive progress reports, go on field trips, observe classrooms by appointment, see sign-in sheets, and leave with their child on their appropriate day and time.

Only the parent with legal custody may enroll the child, withdraw the child, or sign permission slips and paperwork.

It is St. Christopher's Montessori staff policy not to side with either parent in the event of a divorce. Staff also may not write letters in your defense for any legal hearing or legal action. Trust that our staff is here to aid your child and give him/her the best care possible in a consistent and nurturing environment.

If the occasion happens when both parents are in the school grounds during a time when the two parents are estranged, we expect both parents to treat each other with respect. No conflicts will be tolerated while on St. Christopher's Montessori School property.

### **Parents: Notice of Withdrawal and Refund Policy**

Parents who wish to withdraw their child must provide written notice to the Principal sixty (60) days before their intended withdrawal date. Withdrawals with or without notice, and sudden departures are treated the same and are required to pay full fees for the two months following the date of notification/departure/withdrawal. Parents that withdraw their child after Spring Break are responsible for the fees until the end of the year. If a child is absent a period of 30 days without any notice or other explanation, that child is deemed to have withdrawn.

### **School Withdrawal of Service**

The safety of all children is our primary concern. The provision of our service, however, is conditional on both your child's behavior and your treatment of the School and staff. Behavior that poses a safety hazard for the other children or the staff will not be accepted and may result in immediate withdrawal of service.

St. Christopher's Montessori reserves the right to withdraw services for the following reasons:

- A child's willful destruction of the School's property.
- A child's conduct, which is injurious to the moral tone of the school or the physical/mental well-being of others in the school.
- A parent's refusal or inability to abide by the policies and procedures as laid out in the Parent Handbook.
- A parent's conduct being harassing, belligerent, abusive or in any other manner inappropriate as observed by the Principal towards any staff, parents, or children.
- Outstanding fees, either regular or monthly fees, or any other accessorial fees.

### **Student Records Requirements and Best Practices Policy**

St Christopher's Montessori School is committed to ensuring that student records are handled in accordance with all legal requirements

St Christopher’s may add, modify, or remove portions of the Student Records Requirements and Best Practices Policy when it is considered appropriate to do so, if it is not in conflict with legal requirements and government policy.

**Statement of Understanding**

I have read and understood the Parent Handbook and the Policies and Guidelines contained within and agree to abide by them. The Parent Handbook is accessible online at [stcmontessori.ca](http://stcmontessori.ca)

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_