



## **PARENT PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK**



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## **Daily Routine**

### **Attendance**

Please inform the school if your child is unable to come to school or will be absent for extended periods. To keep our school healthy, please note that any communicable diseases or illnesses must be reported to the school immediately. For further information please refer to our Illness Policy.

### **Arrival & Drop Off**

School doors will be open for drop off from 7:30 am for those who like to get a head start on their day. If you happen to arrive early, please wait for a teacher to open the school at the designated time. However not everyone is an early bird, and our philosophy is that we'd prefer for you and your child to arrive at school in a relaxed and happy manner. For some parents that might mean a slightly later start, to allow their child time to get ready.

If your child will be absent, please call or text your class teacher so they are aware and may update the school register.

### **Dismissal & Pickup**

The school day ends for our half day students between 11:45 - 12:00 and we ask that children are picked on time, and that any delays are communicated as soon as possible, so that teachers may continue seamlessly with our full day programme.

To minimize disruption to the class, please notify the school in advance if you need to collect your child earlier than the designated pick-up times so that we can make arrangement to have your child ready to be dismissed.

Our full day programme ends at 3:00, or 5:00 for children enrolled in our Aftercare Programme, and we ask that all children be picked up as close to dismissal time as possible to allow our teachers to prepare the room for the following day. We know however that things happen, and traffic can be trying, if you are running a few minutes behind please notify us as soon as possible.

More information about our Aftercare Programme can be found on our website.

### **Releasing Students**

Island Montessori is protective of your little ones, and we will not release your child to anyone who is not on our authorized pick up list without written or verbal consent from you.

Please ensure that the names of those authorized to collect your children are provided to the school at the start of the year, and any changes are updated as they occur.



## Birthday Traditions

Birthdays are special and are meant to be celebrated, and in the spirit of growing, we encourage children to bring a book to share with the class, or a small plant or seedling to plant in our garden. The children enjoy the presentation to the class and experience the joy of giving and sharing.

To help celebrate the birthday, we also ask for parents to bring in a few special photographs of the birthday boy or girl from birth to their celebrated age for a special 'birthday presentation'.

If you are planning a home party, we will be more than happy to provide you with a class list however, we kindly ask that you do not hand out invitations and thank you cards at school.

## Child Protection Awareness

Island Montessori takes its responsibilities seriously to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. We recognize and acknowledges that our shareholders, directors and employees have a statutory obligation to report evident or suspected abuse or neglect of a child in our care.

Island Montessori is committed to an effective child protection policy which provides clear direction to our staff and others about expected management and behaviour when dealing with child protection issues and the reporting requirements when Child Abuse is suspected. This is based on the National Policy, and founded on good practice and sound procedures, ensuring that child protection concerns, referrals and monitoring are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways which support the needs of the child.

There are three main elements of our child protection policy: **Safe Environment, Staff Safeguarding and Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**. Copies of these policies are available for viewing on our website at [www.islandmontessori.org](http://www.islandmontessori.org).

## Clothing

We encourage our children to be comfortable, and ask parents to ensure that children are dressed in clothing that is simple, washable, sturdy and easy for children to manage. For toddlers we suggest avoiding clothes with difficult buttons or fasteners, as they can impede the bathroom experience. Please remember that we have a large beautiful garden for the children to enjoy, and they will likely get dirty so please dress them accordingly. In the event of a rainy day, children who have rain gear (boots, rain jacket) may be permitted to play outside.

Proper shoes are important and should be comfortable, safe and manageable for children to put on and take off. Sneakers and sandals with heel straps are all suitable. Please, no flip flops.

From time to time a little dirt might become a larger mess. As such please ensure that your child has at least one change of clothing at school at all times. This can remain in their cubby or be brought in each day. Having a change of clothing is essential, not only for bathroom accidents but for any spills or mishaps that may occur.



Please also remember that all children should have a hat, a reusable water bottle and should have sunscreen on each day. We do ask parents to try to ensure their child has sunscreen applied before they get to school, but we do check each child before going outside for playtime, just to ensure there are no sunburns, however if you forget, please let the teacher know and we can apply it for you.

### **Communication, Contact Information & the Island Montessori app**

Class newsletters will be sent out monthly by email which will contain all the key dates and upcoming topics for the month ahead, as well as important reminders. Emails are our primary means of communicating important messages to the school and class groups. To ensure our messages are safely received please ensure that you notify the school if your email address changes during the year.

There are times throughout the school year when we are asked by parents for a list of students as well as phone numbers and email addresses to help them with party and playdate planning. If you do not wish for your contact information to be given out, please let us know.

Finally, we also maintain a Facebook page to share photos of our school activities and events ([facebook.com/groups/islandmontessori](https://facebook.com/groups/islandmontessori)). The Facebook page is a closed group to protect the privacy of the children, if you would like to be added please speak to your teacher.

A list of all the school and class contact information can be found on our website.

### **Developmental Readiness**

We appreciate that each develops differently and on their own timeline. New children to our school are accepted by determining the child's developmental readiness for the Montessori programme, and by the parent' or guardians understanding of the Montessori approach. To fully benefit from our programme, our parent's expectations must be consistent with the general principles of Montessori and the programmes we offer.

For more information on the Montessori method, please visit our website for helpful links and articles, or feel free to speak to any of our teachers who would be happy to talk with you. We also have a selection of books in the office available for your use.

To help ensure children and parents are ready for the Montessori programme, we consider the first few months as a trial period for parents and the school. If concerns about the child's ability to respond to the Montessori environment arise, the school or family may decide to withdraw the child, as per our Notice Period as stated in our Tuition Policy, a copy of which is available on our website.

### **Discipline & Behaviour**

The Montessori approach encourages the child's ability to make good choices as its foundation. The goal of the philosophy is to help children become independent, caring and self-directed human beings,



and to learn responsibility at an early age. The founder of the philosophy, Maria Montessori, said, *“discipline evolves: it is not automatic.”*

Our children are expected to treat one another, staff and materials with respect. Children learn behavior from adult guidance and observation of other children, and our teachers continuously model and demonstrate appropriate behavior for children to follow.

A few golden principles lie at the foundation of our approach, including being kind to others, being responsible for yourself, doing your best, listening and being polite, and respecting their classmates by not disturbing someone else’s work.

To protect all students, some behaviors cannot be tolerated. Examples include fighting and physical violence; taunting or teasing, willful destruction of school or student property or disrespect toward teachers or other children. If the behavior is ongoing, parents will be asked to explore with our assistance, the reason for the behavior. If necessary, professional guidance may be incorporated and the school will make every effort to work with the professionals to ensure that the individual child’s needs are met while ensuring the safety of the other children.

The school reserves the right to dismiss any child who is not coping with our individualized programme or who exhibits behavioral patterns which we are not equipped to handle. In addition, we further reserve the right to dismiss a family due to the behavior of the parents, such as being abusive to other parents, staff members or students, or parents who consistently disregard school policy and procedure.

A copy of our full Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy are available on our website.

### **Emergencies & Accidents**

Accidents happen, from a bruised knee to something a bit more serious. At Island Montessori, all teaching staff are fully trained in First Aid and CPR, and a fully stocked First Aid kit is maintained in each class. If your child receives a cut or a scrape, the wound will be cleaned and treated, and the child will be assessed to ensure they are otherwise ok.

If a child receives an injury to the eyes, nose, mouth or head the parents/guardians will be notified immediately. Please note that no medications will be given to your child without your express written permission. Please ensure the medical section of your enrollment form, or yearly record update form is completed at the start of each school year, taking particular note to inform the school of any allergies or medical needs which should be brought to our attention.

If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the school will use the emergency information in your child’s file. If your child requires immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, we will seek medical care in your name. We will call 911 emergency as necessary, and we will continue to make every effort to contact you.



In the extreme and ideally unlikely event that any situation required immediate medical attention, parents will be contacted. It is vital that all emergency contact numbers and information is kept up to date with the school as we must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

In the event that an ambulance is required, a member of staff will accompany your child on the ambulance if the parent cannot be reached. The cost for any ambulatory or hospital expenses will be the responsibility of the parent.

### **Hazard Management: Earthquakes, Fire Safety & Hurricanes**

Island Montessori maintains a full Hazard Management Policy which contains strategies and action plans focused on natural disasters which could affect the Cayman Islands. Our policy includes our Emergency Response protocols, Emergency Exit Maps, Fire Drill Procedures, Earthquake Drill procedures and Communication methods. The policy also includes a Hurricane Specific appendix which sets out our approach to preparing for an approaching hurricane.

In accordance with the Education Council guidelines fire safety and earthquake drills are held regularly. Children will be taught how to respond to a fire alarm or earthquake, and teachers will calmly escort all children outside to our dedicated Muster Point, where a register will be taken, and a report kept of the drill.

A copy of our full Hazard Management Policy is available on our website.

### **Illness Policy**

Our illness policy is drafted with the primary concern for the wellbeing of all our students and teachers. We request that parents do not send children to school when any of the below symptoms or conditions are present for us to maintain a healthy school environment and to minimize the spread of any infections conditions. We further ask that parents let the school know if your child will be absent due to illness for any length of time.

To assist with determining when your child is ready to be back in class, please take note of the following 'return to school timeline' which gives guidance on how long a child should remain at home once any of the below conditions have occurred.

If any of these symptoms occur during school hours, you will be called to come and pick your child up as soon as possible. Please note the school reserves the right to make the decision to send a child home due to any illness or injury.

The below list is merely a guideline for the more common conditions, the school will follow the recommendations established by the Education Council Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. Our full Illness Policy can be found on our website.

Health Issue	Return to School Timeline
Appearance/Behaviour	A child should stay home if they are unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite or are generally not themselves.
Chicken Pox, Measles or Mumps	A child may return to school once all blisters have dried, usually 5-7 days from onset. A doctor's note will be required
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	A child may return to school 48 hours <b>after</b> treatment begins. For Viral cases of conjunctivitis, a doctor's note may be
Covid	Please follow guidance per the Cayman Islands Public Health Department
Diarrhea	A child must be symptom free for at least 24 hours <b>after</b> treatment starts
Discolored or excessive amounts of nasal congestion	A child must remain out of school if they have excessive amounts of nasal discharge (and/or if discharge is
Fever (temperature over 98.6° F)	A child may return to school one their fever is completely gone for 24 hours <b>without</b> medication
Head lice	A child may return to school once the first treatment is completed and all nits are removed, and no eggs are present.
Impetigo	Only once treatment is completed and blisters have dried
Mucous Cough	A child may return to school once their cough has subsided or is no longer persistent.
Ringworm or Pinworm	24 hours <b>after</b> treatment starts
Sore throat / Streptococcal throat	A child may return to school 48 hours after treatment begins.
Vomiting	A child must be symptom free for at least 24 hours <b>after</b> treatment starts





## **Hurricane/Tropical Storm Policy and School Closures**

Island Montessori follows the policies of the Education Department with regards to school closures for inclement weather. All schools on Grand Cayman close in the event of Tropical Storm Warnings and Hurricane Warnings, and remain closed until the 'All Clear' has been given. Please watch our App for important messages and listen to the radio for announcements on general school closures.

Should the weather become volatile during the school day which necessitates the closing of the school while in session, parents and guardians will be notified to collect their children as soon as possible.

The school may also be required to close due to any unforeseen circumstance that may occur which makes the environment unsafe for the children to be in (e.g. extended power cuts or local area flooding). In the event of an extended power cut lasting more than 2 hours, with no indications of restoration, the school may elect to close for the remainder of the day to ensure the children's safety. Should the school close during a normal day for any reason, parents or guardians will be notified immediately.

The school will make every effort to re-open as quickly as possible after a closure, and parents and guardians will be kept informed via emails, What's App messages and through our Facebook page.

Please note that there will be no refunds for days missed due to school closures because of inclement weather. A full copy of our Hazard Management Policy can be found on our website.

## **Items from Home**

Sharing, or 'Show and Tell' is a great exercise in building your child's confidence. Items brought from home for Show and Tell should be of an educational nature, such as books, memorabilia from a trip, cultural or scientific items, natural materials, or things they have made themselves. Please note that children should not bring toys into school.

## **Lunch, Snacks & Nut Free Zone**

Full day and Extended Day students are required to bring in a packed lunch. We ask for your cooperation in keeping the lunches healthy and ask that you refrain from packing foods that are high in sugar. We also ask that children only have water to drink at school, and no juices or sodas at all.

Snacks are provided by the school each day, and will also be a healthy option, to include fruits, vegetables and simple baked goods or cheeses.

The teachers will encourage the children to eat their healthiest options first and if time permits they may have their "dessert". Please note that any food not eaten will always be sent home. For your child's comfort, please do not trial any 'new foods' at school. While your child will be encouraged to eat it, sending food they are unsure of or don't like will simply cause unnecessary stress for everyone. We appreciate that trying new foods can be tricky, and we are happy to offer feedback and ideas on lunch your child may have observed others eating and shown interest in.



Please make sure that your child's name is clearly labeled on all containers and items that come to school, so we can ensure they go back home again.

Finally, as with most schools in Cayman, Island Montessori is a **nut free school**. Please note that peanuts, nuts and nut products are not permitted in the school. If you have any questions about lunches, snacks or nut free products, feel free to speak with any of our teachers who would be happy to chat with you. Additionally, from time to time we may have children present with additional severe allergies, if so, this information will be communicated to all parents and we ask that parents respect the year to year restrictions to protect our most vulnerable children.

### Parent Grievances

All procedures affecting students and/or parents must be fair and provide integrity and consistency in respect to decisions made in the school setting. This in turn will help to avoid misunderstandings and disputes. To assist our school director and staff, we ask that parent first speak with their child's classroom teacher to discuss a concern regarding their child's academic, social, emotional, or physical progress. If further clarification is required or if the parent is not satisfied with the answer given by the child's teacher, the parent may request a meeting with the school director to discuss further.

### Parent Volunteers

If you are willing or able to be called upon for occasional classroom support, please speak to any one of our teachers. Education Council guidelines require that all teachers and classroom volunteers have a current Child Protection Training, which the school can arrange. Additionally, a Cayman Islands Police Clearance certificate is required, however these can be obtained online through the RCIP at [https://online.gov.ky/cro/faces/home?\\_adf.ctrl-state=6tt83uqdo\\_14](https://online.gov.ky/cro/faces/home?_adf.ctrl-state=6tt83uqdo_14)

Parents interested in volunteering are encouraged to read our Volunteer Policy which can be found on our website.

### Photo Release

During the school year, we will be taking pictures of children in the class participating in various activities. We will use these for press releases, the school newsletter, advertising, and for our website. Your consent to our use of your photo's will be obtained when you complete your registration. Should you change your mind at a later date, please let us know.

### Special Education Needs

Island Montessori fosters an environment of inclusiveness and provides teachers trained in early childhood education special needs to work with students with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency to meet national and international standards.



To achieve this goal, Island Montessori strives to enable students to participate in the full class activities and curriculum, develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning and enable students to become independent learners. Where possible we will provide supplementary teaching and additional support where necessary and will involve parents and professional counsellors

in consultation with parents in supporting their children. Our teachers will collaborate in the implementation on learning support and establish Individual Education Plans to enhance learning reduce difficulties in learning.

Our inherent and underlying philosophy is that every child has the desire to learn, and learns best at their own pace in a support environment. When the situation is appropriately managed, every child can benefit from interacting with a child with special educational needs and all children benefit greatly when teacher and parents work together. Whilst we may not be equipped to meet all the needs of every child depending on the nature of their special educational needs, we will do what is feasible to accommodate the needs of the child.

Printed copies of our full Special Education Needs Policy are available on our website.

### **Visitors & Safety**

Our main entry doors are locked each day once the arrival process is largely complete. If you are running late, or to enter the school at any time during the school day, please ring the doorbell and a member of staff will be with you shortly.

All visitors are required to sign into our school visitor log book.

### **Yearly Calendar**

Island Montessori follows the Education Council guidelines with respect to the number of in-class days per school year. A school yearly calendar will be printed is made available our website. Our school follows all Cayman public holidays, as well as traditional school holidays, which means we will be closed for Christmas and Easter Holidays, as well as half term breaks.

A copy of the current school calendar can be found on our website at [www.islandmontessori.org](http://www.islandmontessori.org).