

Island Montessori Children's School

COVID-19 Guidebook

**COVID-19 Guidelines & Procedures
for In-Person Learning
for 3's, 4's and Kindergartners
2021-22**



Welcome

Welcome to this new adaptation of Montessori education, when activated by a world pandemic, we are called to innovate and return to the roots of our Montessori method. This guidebook is a consolidation of many developing resources. It is meant to support us in following state guidelines and adapting to these conditions while continuing to offer adults and children a safe and vibrant Montessori learning experience.

Our love for our students, families, staff and Montessori education compels us to push aside fear and continue with a thoughtful and conscientious plan that ensures the continued education of our children during this critical period in their development. As always, we stand by our school mission, enabling our students to learn and grow within a Montessori environment that models grace and courtesy and fosters a peaceful community of lifelong learners.

We will continue to support families regarding their concerns about students in the school building. We know this virus is not “over”. We will continue to work with the guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Based on current recommendations and requirements, this guide outlines IMCS practices/policies and how our families should contribute to the safety and healthiness of our learning environment.

We look forward to a successful and exciting 2021-22 school year.

In Peace,

IMCS Administration



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Overview of the IMS Safety Approach

Decisions about the methods and procedures for opening our school are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Guidance from these groups is subject to updates. If the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic change, our plan may also change.

Additionally, we closely follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), whose current recommendation states:

“Schools are fundamental to child/adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of children and adolescents, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.”

We join together, unified in creating a plan, with confidence that we are capturing the needs of our school community. Adaptability and flexibility are essential ingredients to our success, along with how well we effectively work together to communicate with one another throughout this time.

Our approach is organized into four sections. Three sections concern safety and procedure, while the final section defines the Montessori experience. Each section is listed below.

- Screening and Approach to COVID-19 Cases
- Hygiene and Sanitation
- Social Distancing Procedures
- Culture of Learning

Screening

Symptom Awareness and Knowledge

Screening and School Guidelines for Cases

Daily Health Checks play a crucial role in keeping any infectious disease, including COVID-19, out of our community. Each staff member is required to complete a Daily Health Check questionnaire before starting their day. Responses are monitored by the administration. Parents are required to screen their children each morning for new or otherwise unexplained symptoms. Upon arrival at school, students will not be screened by staff to enter the building; therefore, parents must screen their children and keep symptomatic children home.

COVID-19 Symptoms:

As outlined by the Strong Schools Public Health Toolkit, the COVID-19 symptoms used in screening metrics for health and safety (with or without being diagnosed with COVID-19) include:

- Recent fever (100.4°F)
- Chills
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- New cough
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Headache
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)

Children must be free of symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 to be on the school campus. Most importantly, children who are feeling unwell or have a temperature of 100.4°F should not come to school.

Home Symptom Screening Guidelines

Knowing the COVID-19 symptoms and understanding how to screen your children using the symptom guide above can drastically reduce the spread of disease, thus providing a healthy space to continue learning in the classroom. Staying home when sick is a community responsibility, which we should follow so our children can have more time in the physical Montessori environment.

Daily, children must have a health screening at home, including temperature checks. Use this checklist for your at-home screening:

- ✓ Check your child's temperature. Do not come to school if their temperature reads 100.4°F or higher.
- ✓ Children must be free of symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (listed above) to come to the school campus.

Symptom Identification During School

If a child feels ill while on campus, they must immediately tell a staff member who will notify the front office. If a staff member notices a child is not feeling well or observes signs of illness, they will notify the front office. After contacting the front office, children who are feeling unwell or have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher will be held in the isolated waiting area. An employee will contact the child's parents/guardians to pick them up within 30 minutes.

Reporting of COVID-19

We will report suspected, presumptive, or positive cases of COVID-19 to the New Hanover Department of Health Services and work with them for follow-up and contact tracing. Privacy will be maintained and prioritized. If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at school, the impacted areas will be disinfected per [CDC guidelines](#). The classroom teacher and/or administration will communicate with the family to connect and support.

Suspected, Presumptive, and Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

The resources above help you determine when to responsibly keep your child(ren) at home. If you have questions regarding when to send your child(ren) to school or keep them home, please refer to our guidance in the [Diagnostic Guidelines for Returning to School](#) and contact our school with additional questions.

Guidelines For Returning to School

Once displaying symptoms, being in contact, or being tested for COVID-19, the guidelines below must be followed to determine a safe return to school.

The table below provides the information from the [NC Safe Schools Toolkit](#).

Students who have...	EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE COVID-19 symptom, WITH or WITHOUT being diagnosed with COVID-19	Been DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19 but DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS	Been EXPOSED* TO COVID-19 and DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS
Can I send them to School?	NO	NO	NO
When can I send them back to School?	<p>ALL MUST BE TRUE (or *see documentation)</p> <p>1) It has been at least 10 days since they first had symptoms.</p> <p>2) It has been at least 24 hours since they had a fever, without using fever-reducing medicine.</p> <p>3) It has been at least 24 hours since the symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath without the use of medication.</p>	Once 10 DAYS HAVE PASSED since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test.	Once 14 DAYS HAVE PASSED since the date of their last exposure (10 days if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring; or 7 days if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring) AND the student has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than 5 days of quarantine.
Do I need a Doctor's Note or COVID-19 Testing Documentation?	<p>NO</p> <p>**BUT- If students have a negative COVID-19 test, they can return to school <u>once there is no fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines and they have felt well for 24 hours.</u></p> <p>*If an alternative diagnosis from a healthcare provider determines a COVID-19 test is not needed, they can return to school, following normal school policies, once there is no fever without the use of medication and have felt well for 24 hours.</p>	NO	NO

*Exposure is defined as being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more cumulative within a period of 24 hours.

Healthy Hygiene Practices

Hygiene and Sanitation

Increased diligence in cleaning and sanitizing our campus is already implemented. We understand that good hygiene practices are among the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness, especially in a school environment. The staff was trained before opening classrooms on basic measures to prevent the spread of infection. Teachers will give lessons to students about these measures, as well as monitor student handwashing and sanitizing throughout the day. Face coverings, especially face masks and face shields, are an important piece of our strategy. We secured adequate PPE. Per North Carolina guidelines, all adults and youth, K-8th grade children, are required to wear face masks or cloth face coverings while on campus. This includes family

members and caregivers waiting outside to drop off or pick up children. We have face masks available on an as-needed basis.

Measures of Personal Protection

The staff was trained on basic measures to prevent the spread of infection, including washing hands frequently and covering one's coughs and sneezes. Teachers will give lessons in class to students about these measures and monitor them throughout the day. Signage for these measures of personal protection can be found throughout the school and in classrooms.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitation

Teachers will give frequent lessons on handwashing in the classroom, modify flexible schedules to include handwashing breaks throughout the school day, and reinforce handwashing during key times throughout the school day:

- ✓ Before and after eating
- ✓ After using the restroom
- ✓ Touching shared objects
- ✓ After recess
- ✓ When entering the school/classroom

If a child is unable to access a handwashing station, hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) will be provided. Hand sanitizer stations are at the entrance to each classroom. Children are expected to use hand sanitizer when entering the classroom each morning.

We will encourage children and staff to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, especially before eating, after going to the bathroom, and after wiping their nose, coughing, or sneezing.

If your child experiences sensitivity to hand sanitizer, please inform your child's teacher and the front office staff so they can provide your child other opportunities to wash their hands.

Covering a Cough or a Sneeze

Teachers will provide lessons on how to sneeze and cough into a tissue. Children will be encouraged to take the following actions when coughing or sneezing:

- ❑ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- ❑ If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.

Face Coverings

All preschool and kindergarten students in the Children's School building are required to wear face masks when entering the building. All adults who must enter the building are required to wear face masks regardless of vaccination status.

Short breaks from wearing face masks will be provided throughout the day. This may include snack breaks, lunchtime, and recess or as individually needed.

Maintaining Healthy Facilities

Facility Sanitation and Cleaning Procedures

Facility staff reviewed and received the [EPA's list of products](#) effective against COVID-19. Please contact the office for a list of the products we have on campus and their usage instructions.

For each protocol, IMS will use an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Further, a Lysol sprayer with a hospital-grade disinfectant will be used daily after school, along with an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer to clean and disinfect the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting protocols will continually be reviewed and enhanced regarding frequency and intensity.

Cleaning supplies are kept locked and out of reach of children. All products being used are safe and appropriate for classroom settings. To allow for proper drying and ventilation, stronger products that might produce fumes will be applied after the school day.

Responsibilities of the Nightly Cleaning Team

Cleaning Protocol

- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in classrooms, hallways, and bathrooms.
- Monitor hand sanitizer, soap, and paper products.
- Use an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer in the entire school building.

Responsibilities of the IMS Staff and Faculty

Classroom Cleaning Protocol (throughout work cycle) - Lead Teacher and Assistant

- Check cleaning checklist from the previous day to ensure the room is clean and disinfected
- Prepare the environment and cleaning stations
- Disinfect tables after use
- Disinfect Montessori materials after use
- Disinfect all touched surfaces mid-day or as needed (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, faucets, sinks, etc.)

Common Areas Cleaning Protocol - Administration and Support Staff

- Daily walk through of playground and building
- Sanitize drop-off areas
 - Handwashing and sanitizing stations
 - Tardy clipboard, early signout clipboard, and pens
 - Restock gloves and other PPE equipment
- Sanitize kitchens and office equipment throughout the day and after use
- Clean high-touch areas
 - Door handles
 - Railings
 - Water coolers
 - Copy machine buttons
 - Light switches
- Sanitize pick-up areas
- Final clean of classrooms and hallways after all children leave

Material Cleaning Protocol - Lead Teacher and Assistant

All frequently touched materials are included in our cleaning protocol. This includes tables, chairs, cubbies, and Montessori shelf works. Teachers will educate children about proper sharing of materials or supplies.

Limited Building Access

To protect the health and safety of our community, only essential visitors are allowed on our school campus. Essential visitors will be approved by the administration ahead of access to the building. These measures in minimizing the number of people on site limit unintentional exposure in our school environment.

All efforts will be made to keep necessary visitors to a minimum, including the use of virtual or telephone meetings with families and guests. Before entering the building, necessary visitors are required to follow all face-covering guidelines, receive a temperature check, and complete the screening questionnaire.

Social Distancing

Building Social Distance Awareness

Social distancing means keeping space between students and other people outside of their household, and is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Our staff will work to help maintain a 3 - 6 ft distance between students as much as possible.

We took actions to ensure our environments support measures of health and safety that honor social distancing. We evaluated our children's daily procedures from the time they arrive until the time they are dismissed. Each environment we prepare naturally lends itself to promoting social distance and gently alerting children to be aware of social distancing. The actions taken to prepare arrival/dismissal areas, hallways, bathrooms, and outdoor areas include:

- Signage to remind children of social distancing practices
- Floor markings in all hallways and congregating areas to indicate 6 feet

Arrival and Dismissal

Drop-off Procedures

Please make every effort to be on time. Classes start promptly at 8:30. Your child will miss an important part of the day by being late. Doors open at 8:15 am. For parents in need of early drop off, our staff provides early care from 7:45am – 8:15am.

Please enter the charter/children's school main campus off Carolina Beach Road and bear right to drive in the designated line to drop your child off at the children's school main entrance gateway. A staff member will greet your child at the car upon arrival. At this time, we are not able to allow parents to walk their child into the building.

Temperature checks will not be required for a child to enter the building, so once again, home screening will be vital to the health and safety of our school.

Early Drop-off begins at 7:45. Please keep your children in the car until staff say to exit the vehicle. Normal drop-off begins at 8:00. Please only utilize early drop off if needed. Our students will report directly to their classrooms and teachers will be in their rooms to welcome them.

Our staff will return to the building promptly at 8:30 am to start the day for students. If you arrive after 8:30, please park and walk your child into the front of the building and sign them in. Please remember to wear a mask.

Dismissal Procedures

Half-Time Primary- 12:45 pm

Full-Time Primary/Kindergarten Students- 2:45 pm

Dismissal: Please enter the main campus off Carolina Beach Road and drive in the designated line and pull up to the children's school main entrance gateway. A staff member will bring your child to the car to greet you and say their goodbyes for the day. Please note: Only adults who are listed on the Emergency Contact Form will be allowed to pick up your child. Adults listed on the Emergency Contact Form will need to provide a picture ID on their first visit.

Please place your child's car seat in the left back seat of your car for convenience. Once your child is in the car, please pull up and buckle him/her up.

Early Pick-Up Procedures

If you need to pick up your child early, please be certain to do so by 2:15 p.m. Between the times of 2:15 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., we kindly ask that you refrain from an early pick-up. Please notify the school in advance if you are planning to pick up your child early so we can be prepared. You will need to park your car and come into the building while wearing a mask to sign your child out. All visitors must wait in the front entrance area. We will bring your child to you.

Preparedness Plan for Sudden Closure due to COVID-19 or Other Natural Event

Remote learning will not be a full-time option for families this school year. If a student requires remote learning due to quarantine requirements, an online learning option will be provided. The student will have access to a Google Classroom with links to materials, a guide of daily task completion, and email/chat to stay in contact with the Lead Teacher and Assistant. One daily Zoom meeting will be provided to check-in and answer any questions.

The Children's School strives to provide safe, nurturing, in-person Montessori education for as long as possible. However, should a natural event like a hurricane or NC state COVID-19 metrics worsen significantly enough to require the State of North Carolina to suspend in-person learning, the Children's School may employ developmentally appropriate remote learning. This plan may be modified according to a child's enrollment in the private preschool program or in kindergarten as part of the public charter school (the latter guided by the mandates of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction). Note: In the event that the public school system mandates distance-learning for charter school kindergarten students, it is possible that our private preschool students may continue in-person learning on campus.

Should remote learning be employed for any period of time, for any group of children, it may include:

- ❑ A Montessori at Home learning platform consisting of short personalized teacher-created and supplementary video lessons and accompanying templates for parents to bring Montessori education through play-based, experiential learning in the home environment.
- ❑ Provision of supplemental resources to further learning in the areas of early literacy; environmental education and early science; mathematics; music; social studies; and more. Kindergarten families who do not have a device for remote learning, such as an iPad, may request to check one out from the charter school.
- ❑ Weekly synchronous lessons via a password-protected Zoom link with a lead teacher and peers to promote engagement and peer interaction. For example, this may entail a live read-aloud of a children's book followed by group discussion and follow-up activities on the Montessori at Home learning platform.
- ❑ Online office hours at different times of the day to be available one-on-one with children and their families if they have questions or need additional support.
- ❑ Opportunities for support for parents coordinated by staff.

Tuition and Enrollment

Our number one priority is to keep our children, staff, and families safe. Secondly, we want to create the best learning environment for all students. Ideally, we prefer to offer in-person learning; however, should COVID metrics or other event prevent classroom-based Montessori education, the Children's School teachers will provide innovative, nurturing, and meaningful remote learning experiences.

Tuition is very important to supporting high quality Montessori education regardless of delivery format. We must continue to pay our bills and to pay our teacher and staff salaries. In the event of remote learning, the following policies and procedures for tuition payments will remain in place:

- ❑ Enrollment is a year-long commitment and the monthly tuition will still be due at regular intervals regardless of illness, COVID or other emergency-related closings, or holidays (unless the Director or her designee informs you otherwise).
- ❑ To terminate your child's enrollment, a 30-day notice in writing must be given to the Director; otherwise you will continue to be charged your monthly tuition. (In general, no reimbursement of tuition will be granted, absent notice to the contrary.)
- ❑ Should you request an extended leave for your child(ren), the Children's School cannot guarantee enrollment when you are prepared to return.
- ❑ To ensure your child's enrollment, parents must re-register their child(ren) for the following year.