



The Acorn School of Charleston Parent Handbook

Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Acorn School of Charleston! We look forward to a rewarding year as we guide the children through days of work and play, arts and crafts, story, and song. We are also pleased to welcome new parents to the Waldorf community. We are honored that you have entrusted the care of your child to us.

The Handbook is subject to regular review and changes as deemed necessary. Families will be advised of updates as they occur.

School Philosophy

“Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this non-intellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today. “

Creative play is at the heart of our Early Childhood and Kindergarten program. Through imaginative play, children learn to experience and integrate the possibilities of life. Self-initiated play fosters children’s abilities to think creatively, problem solve, and develop social relationships, practicing and testing their skills as they tackle more and more difficult tasks. Using the simplest of materials from nature to construct worlds, children flex their imaginations, which grow strong and active; open-ended toys allow children to imitate and transform activities of everyday human life. Participating in play cultivates and strengthens the child’s comprehension, memory, and imagination, as well as their growing body.

First Day of School

We begin the year with the beautiful short ritual called The Rose Ceremony. In a fully developed school, the 8th graders hand a rose to each rising 1st Grade student. At a younger school, the teacher passes the rose to the child as he/she crosses a literal and metaphorical bridge. It is symbolic of the beauty of the passage from one stage to the next and Waldorf properly honors it.

The Rose Ceremony (**for the grades children only**) will be held on Wednesday, August 23, 2023, at 8:30am. School will dismiss at 12pm, after the first main lesson and review.

The first full day of school for all students, is Thursday, August 24, 2023.

The school year ends on Friday, June 7th, 2024. Our last day will run as a normal school day, except we will have a farewell ceremony at dismissal.

Arrival

School begins at 8:15 am.



Drop Off Plan

Upon arriving, please park in the front parking lot. You will see an Acorn School sign under the Unity Sign in front of the sanctuary. Please follow that sidewalk around the building. You will see a set of double red doors. This is where teachers will greet all students.

Teachers will greet children at the double red doors between 8am - 8:15am. At 8:15am the doors will close. Teachers will reopen the doors briefly at 8:20. There will be no admission after that time to prevent disruption in the classroom and daily rhythms.

In our early childhood Kindergarten program sometimes, the child has difficulty separating from their parent. Lengthy explanations can create more anxiety. You can help your child make the transition easier by showing your own confidence and trust with a matter-of-fact attitude. Please arrive on time as the first few moments of play are especially important for your child in establishing social connections.

Dismissal

The early bird students will be dismissed at 12:15 pm. Children who attend for the full day will be dismissed at 3:00 pm.

Preparing for the Kindergarten

We ask that the children be dressed in cotton or wool clothing as much as possible. Cotton and wool clothing allow the skin to “breathe.” Please refrain from dressing your child in clothing with media images on them. This includes cartoons, sport symbols and marketing slogans. Having the children wear functional, simple play clothes helps the social climate, leaves them free to create their own images, and shelters them from the pressures of adult consumerism.

Grade School Preparations Clothing, Toys, Outdoor Gear

All the suggestions for the Early Childhood program apply to the Grade school as well. Attention to clothing, proper outdoor gear and shoes is important as a child grows. We also ask that the same policy regarding toys be followed for our grade school students. Please monitor the inventory of your child's backpack daily, keeping in mind the school's policies.

Change of Clothing

Please provide an extra set of clearly marked clothes. Include a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a few pair of socks and underwear. Place the clothes in a nice cardboard photo box that are clearly marked with your child's name. The photo boxes are sold in craft stores. Please check these boxes during the year and replenish as needed.



Indoor/Outdoor Shoes

To keep our classroom clean, we ask that every child has a pair of indoor shoes that stay at school. Please provide a pair of comfortable, plain shoes without ties, such as loafers or Velcro closure shoes for indoors. Bring your child to school in sturdy outdoor shoes. Please do not bring the following to school as their outdoor shoes: moccasins, clogs, crocs, slippers, shoes that have lights, or shoes with wheels.

Outdoor Gear

The kindergarten class operates outside everyday rain or shine. Rain gear is essential. Raincoats, rain pants and boots help the children enjoy rainy days. Please purchase rain pants to keep at school so we can use them when needed. Be sure to clearly label all clothing to be left at school.

Toys

Please keep all toys, stickers, cards, watches, toy jewelry, ornate hair bands and dolls at home. Our school will have an abundance of soft dolls and toys for the children to play with. Toys brought from home are extremely difficult to share. Social exclusion issues often result when items are brought in from outside the classroom.

Festivals

The kindergarten celebrates four festivals during the school year. These seasonal celebrations are an important part of the school. The festivals take place in the morning, and we make every effort to include families and the greater community. In hosting these festivals, we have found them to nurture all participants regardless of age. The exact dates of these celebrations will be posted on our website. Parental involvement is both fun and a huge boost to preparations needed to make the most of the festivals. Check with the Parent Council Representative(s) for ways you could help! Additional important holidays will be honored in the classes throughout the school year.

Food

We ask that your child be sent with a nutritious lunch and snack that can be eaten without the need of warming or of additional utensils. We find that a child who is allowed to feed themselves without need of assistance gains a great sense of self-reliance.

School Closure

The Acorn School of Charleston follows the lead of the Charleston County Public School District for weather-related closures. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis and be reported as early as possible to parents, understanding that closing the school is disruptive to our families.

Parent Conferences



Parent conferences are held twice a year and incorporated into the school day schedule. Parents are asked to sign-up for a 30-minute session. This is a special time to share information about your child and to strengthen the bond between the adults who are responsible for the child's healthy development. The dates for the parent-teacher conferences will be posted on the school calendar through our school.

Class Meetings

These are held in the evening twice throughout the school year. The evenings are meant to introduce parents to the activities of the classroom. Parents may experience how their child is learning. This is a chance to ask questions about the curriculum to gain deeper understanding of the Waldorf methods of teaching.

Parent Council

The Parent Council is a vital opportunity for parents to give service to Acorn School and build community. Generally, one or two people will chair the Parent Council. The committee serves to engage the parents in the work of the school, bridge communication between the parents, teachers and board of the school, and build capacities for Acorn's future.

Feedback

While reserving teaching methods for the faculty, we value your input. The suggested structure for communications both positive and negative feedback will be:

1. Going directly to the person with whom there is a concern or suggestion
2. If the concern involving your child or other children persists, please make an appointment with your child's teacher
3. If your concern involves a faculty member, please make an appointment with the director, Renee Meyer

Aftercare Structure

The Acorn School of Charleston is happy to offer an aftercare for your children.

There will be two school employees who are responsible to the program. Julia Keeter is the main contact regarding sign up, payments, and other information. All students who will be a part of the aftercare program, will need to be signed up by Wednesday the week prior to their attendance, unless they are signed up in advance for year-round aftercare. There will be no drop-ins accepted.

Please note that our services are \$20 per day between 3 PM–5 PM and will not extend after 5 PM. We accept cash or check (made out to the Acorn School of Charleston). Although we do understand an occasional emergency may occur, there will be a fee of \$50 for a late pick up after 5pm.

Each student will need a water bottle and snack daily while in aftercare.



Health

Waldorf teachers are concerned with the whole child and honor the relationship between health and learning. We welcome conversation about your child's health including past and present illnesses, sleeping habits, sudden changes, and home life rhythms.

If your child is ill or has any communicable disease, please keep them at home. Contact the teacher to let them know about the absence. If your child becomes sick or is injured at school, you will be contacted as soon as possible. If you cannot be reached, the people on the emergency contact form will be called.

Media Guidelines

The Acorn School of Charleston values the healthy development of our students above all else. With that in mind we want to make a clear statement on what we expect from families regarding the child's exposure to all forms of electronic media.

The cultivation of the child's imaginative capacity, their ability to form vivid inner images, is central to Waldorf education. The rich inner experience provides the foundation for all that will later unfold as creative thought. Our early childhood program is committed to supporting this natural development of the young child and our curriculum is suffused with wonder and imagination.

Research on the destructive influence of media upon creative play and brain development in children is well documented and readily available. ParentFurther, a Search Institute resource for families, is an excellent site for families interested in learning more.

We suggest that parents embrace the following guidelines,

- 1) Ideally the children will have no media exposure during the week. This includes TV, the Internet, video games and smart phones.
- 2) Limited media exposure on the weekends, these should be programs that the parents have prescreened with commercials edited out.

One Waldorf mother described the benefits of less media exposure this way—

“When our daughter, who is four, gets home from school she wanders off to her room and begins creating her world. She lays out silky cloths, sets up colored stones in a row, brings out her little wooden animals, and sitting in front of them on a stool, she begins singing and telling them stories. She has found a way to bring what is inside of her out and into her play, and she does it everywhere she goes. To sit her in front of the television would kill that.”