



Children's Learning Center  
*at Morningside Heights*

90 La Salle Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 663-9318  
[www.clcnyc.com](http://www.clcnyc.com)

# PARENT HANDBOOK

## Letter from the Director

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Children's Learning Center at Morningside Heights! We look forward to greeting your family at our school, and are grateful to be sharing such a special time in your child's life. This handbook will explain many of CLC's policies and procedures. Its purpose is to make life at school as safe, happy, and productive as possible for you and your child, and to provide you with the day-to-day practical information you will need throughout the year. We urge you to read it, share it with your caregivers, and let us know if you have any questions.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation, and hope you will refer to the Handbook again and again throughout the year. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. We will work actively to keep all lines of communication open and to work with you on behalf of your children.

With love,

Molly Vozick-Levinson  
Director

# Children's Learning Center

## *at Morningside Heights*

### **OUR MISSION**

The Children's Learning Center honors the imaginative spark within each child and celebrates learning through play, the arts, and hands-on exploration. We nurture children's curiosity, creativity, and fascination with the natural world. Together our teachers and students cultivate caring classrooms where we explore our tapestry of rich traditions, languages, and perspectives. Our school works to encourage confidence, resiliency, and a life-long love of learning.



COVID-10 Policy note: please be advised that CLC is currently reviewing protocols related to parent-school interaction, including arrival and dismissal procedures, in accordance with developing guidelines from the NYCDOHMH, the NY State and City governments, and the CDC. These protocols also impact class size/distribution of children. We will distribute updated 2021-22 protocols before the start of the school year. Thank you!

## I. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### SCHOOL HOURS AND PROCEDURES

The Children's Learning Center runs from September through June, with an optional July summer camp. CLC offers flexible scheduling to meet the needs of children and working families. Children may attend three, four or five days per week from 8:30 to 1:00, 3:30

#### Overtime Policy

Families may request overtime during the school year on an occasional basis, if space allows for additional children that day. Requests for overtime must come in advance by at least one day. However, if an emergency arises we will try our best to accommodate needs as space allows. The cost for overtime is as follows:

1:00pm - 3:30pm      \$45

#### Arrival

Classrooms are open for arrival at 8:30am. Before that time, teachers are preparing the rooms and having their morning meetings. If you arrive early, please wait until 8:30am to enter the room and remain with your child until teachers open the door. Please arrive at school on time and no later than 8:45am before classes gather for morning meeting. From 8:30–8:45, parents are invited into the classroom to help children settle in, and explore the room. We strongly encourage arriving to school on time, as it can be difficult for children to enter into a room where an activity is already underway, and it is disturbing to the rest of the group when children arrive throughout the morning. An unhurried, timely arrival will help your child settle into the school day comfortably and be ready to learn. When you arrive, **please wash hands** with your child, put lunches away, and settle in. If you do arrive late on a given day, a teacher will assist you in a quiet, brief drop off at the door.

#### Dismissal

Pick-up times are 1:00pm, 3:30pm      Whichever your child's schedule, please be prompt in arriving for pick up. For 1:00pm and 3:30pm pick ups, we ask that you collect your child's belongings and leave the room within ten minutes to allow the remaining children and teachers to move on to the next phase of their day. When children are resting, please enter and leave quietly. Do not socialize inside the classroom.

***If you are expecting to arrive late for afternoon pick-up, please call the office in advance so that the teachers and your child can be notified. The fee for late pickups is \$50 for 1:00pm and 3:30pm and will be added to your invoice.***

#### Snow Day Policy

CLC closure is at the discretion of the Director. When possible decisions will be made the previous evening, and always by 6:00am on the day of a potential closure. An email is sent out to all families via the email list. Please be sure to check your email in the morning on days when inclement weather is expected.

## Composition of Classrooms

CLC has three classrooms, comprised of mixed age groups:

- The Yellow Room accommodates 10 infants and toddlers from age 6 months – 2 years.
- The Red Room accommodates 12–15 children aged 2–3.5 years.
- The Purple Room accommodates 15–17 children, aged 3.5–6 years.

## FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

### Separation and Adjustment

A child's first school experience includes a separation between parent and child which must be handled with great sensitivity. It is our goal to make sure each child and parent has time to develop the trust needed for successful separation, and to help the child make the transition from home to school. Once this begins, children are well on their way to seeing themselves as competent and independent individuals.



Each child will respond differently to the unfamiliarity of school. Some run right in whether it is their first or fifth new school year, and others need extra support for weeks. Some parents and children say goodbye with ease, while others find it difficult. Some children will separate quickly; others need more time. All of these responses are common and developmentally appropriate.

In order to encourage a relaxed, secure adjustment to school, we employ a phase-in schedule for the first week. Children will come to school in smaller groups for gradually lengthening periods of time. Although some children may seem ready from the beginning, it is important for the whole class to begin this way. You will receive the phase-in schedule for your child prior to the start of school.

A parent or caregiver needs to be available for this phase-in period. Parents are invited to stay in the classroom for the first day to help the children get acquainted with their new surroundings and teachers. Please keep in mind that the 1-week phase in is a mandatory minimum, but that sometimes children need extra days or even weeks of support from families as they adjust to school. Our teachers are devoted to making your child's transition to school as comfortable as possible, and will work with your family individually to plan an adjustment strategy that will support your child best.

Leaving your child at school for the first time can be just as hard—if not harder—for parents as it is for children. Although it can be challenging, the time will come when it is best for your child's adjustment to give them time alone at school, even if your child is experiencing distress at the moment of separation. Remember that when you are not with your child, we are giving them all our love and care here at school, and that those hard first days will pass!



### **HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT SAYING GOODBYE**

- Once it is time to leave, don't hesitate; say goodbye and tell your child you are going to sit in the greeting area, going to work, etc.
- ALWAYS say goodbye to your child. **Never sneak out**, even if you see your child is engaged in an activity.
- Don't expect a good-bye back.
- Don't ask your child permission to leave. A definite "I'm leaving now" is most helpful to your child and **let them know you'll be back or will see them later**.
- Prior to and at the start of school, speak positively to your child about school and read books about starting school.
- Giving your child a transitional object (something from home) to have in school can help your child adjust.
- Try to smile and relax.

### **CLOTHING and DAILY SUPPLIES**

Children come to school to explore, play, and learn. Art play, outdoor play, cooking, and sensory play are often messy activities. Clothing should be sturdy, comfortable, and labeled with your child's name. Children should always be dressed to enjoy outdoor play. Coming home in messy clothes is a sign that your child is fully engaged with her school life. Smocks are available for children to use during art activities, but we do not require children to use them. **Please only send your child to school in clothes that can get messy.**

Rubber soled shoes that allow for safe running and climbing are essential. Please send your child to school in weather-appropriate coats, hats, gloves and shoes.

All parents should leave the following extra clothing and supplies at school:

- a complete change of seasonable clothing, labeled with your child's name, including underwear, socks, shirt, pants, and a warmer top;
- a small fitted sheet and blanket for rest time if staying past 1 pm; - a special toy or transitional object, as your child requires.
- Parents of younger children should also provide: diapers, diaper ointment, extra bibs, and wipes.

## MEALS and SNACKS

All children should bring a healthy, packed lunch from home every day. Snacks will be provided at school, provided by parents on a rotating basis. Teachers will post a schedule and advise on the class's snack needs. Please do not send sugary snacks like cookies.

**Yellow Room families**, please also provide the following items, as your child requires: bottles, sufficient for the day, pre-measured, prepared, and labeled; extra baby food and cereal, labeled and dated; training cup and feeding spoon. ***In accordance with the NYCDOH, all baby bottles must be labeled with your child's first and last names.*** Children's use of milk, bottles, baby food, etc. is entirely at families' discretion.

***CLC is a peanut/tree nut FREE school. Parents can bring home-baked goods to school as long as they do not have nuts in them. Please be sure to read the ingredients of packaged baking mixes carefully.***

CLC respects the severity of nut-related allergies, and is designated a nut-free zone. This means that no tree nuts or peanuts can ever enter our facility—even in passing by parents or caregivers. Please make sure your person is completely free of nuts before entering our space, and relate the message to anyone who will be picking up your child. Please never send anything with nuts into CLC, even if it is not intended for children (for example, parent meetings and teacher gifts). When giving chocolate or other baked goods to teachers as presents, please double check ingredients.

Parents of children with specific food needs, such as allergies or other food needs (for example, being vegan, keeping kosher) should provide an alternative snack for use during birthday parties, and other class events. These alternative snacks should always be kept at CLC in the cupboard or refrigerator in case a need arises.

***At times, the Director may have to adjust this policy on a class-by-class basis, depending on the specific needs of children in each group.***

## TOILET TRAINING

All classrooms have fully-equipped bathrooms with child-sized toilets and sinks, and bathroom time is part of the school day. Teachers encourage and support children's evolving independence and self help skills in the bathroom, and parents and teachers work as a team on toilet training issues.

Children at CLC are at all levels in their toilet training. Please check your child's diaper before you say goodbye in the morning. A change of clothing and several pairs of underwear should be sent to school for "newly-trained" children. Accidents are part of the learning process. Children should be taken to the bathroom prior to the start of school each day. We respect children's individual paths towards toilet independence, and children do not need to be potty trained to be a student in any classroom at CLC.

## BIRTHDAY PARTIES / SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

If you would like to celebrate a birthday or other special celebration (birth of a new sibling, a new pet, etc.) at school, please confer with your teachers at least a week prior to the event to schedule an appropriate time. Typically families celebrate either with a special snack before going outside, or a special lunch like a "pizza party." If you would like to provide a whole meal like pizza to the class, please let us know at least a week in advance so we can make arrangements for children with food restrictions.

Please Note: CLC is currently reviewing all health and environment guidelines for the 2021-22 school year, in accordance with developing directives and recommendations from NY State, City, the NYCDOHMH, and the CDC. We will present an updated health and safety plan before the start of the 2021-22 school year. Requirements around medical forms form entry will remain in place. All 2021-22 COVID-19 Health Policies will supersede our standards policies, below.

## II. HEALTH and ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES

•Smoking is prohibited in all indoor/outdoor areas of the CLC •

### Medical Forms

The N.Y.C. Department of Health, Bureau of Day Care requires that each child have a complete, age appropriate medical examination every year.

*Children may not attend school unless a medical examination is completed prior to the start of school and the form is on file in the office.*

### Absence from School

Please call the office when your child will be absent from school. If your child has a communicable disease (e.g., chicken pox, conjunctivitis, strep, impetigo), you need to let the office know promptly so that parents of exposed children can be notified. Depending on the illness, children may require a doctor's note to return to school. This decision is at the discretion of the Director.

### Illness

It is quite common for children in their first years of school to have frequent colds and respiratory infections. If children are ill or become ill in school, an administrator or teacher will call parents to take them home.

Please be extremely conservative about sending your child to school if you suspect he or she may be getting sick. Parents must keep their children home if they have:

- fever (or if they've had one in the previous 24-hour period);
- heavy nasal discharge from a cold;
- persistent cough;
- fussy, cranky, or atypical behavior;
- recent bout of diarrhea and/or vomiting (in the previous 24-hour period);
- reddened eyes with discharge and/or crusty lashes.

Parents should also refrain from bringing sick/contagious other siblings to school when dropping off or picking up their children from CLC.

### Returning to School

Children must be **fever and vomit free for 24 hours** before returning to school. We go outside every day when the weather is safe to do so. Therefore, children too sick to go outside should not be sent to school.

*If your child contracts a contagious illness, such as Coxsackie's or Chicken pox, a doctor's note is required before your child may return to school.*

### Medications

The N.Y.C. Department of Health does not permit us to administer any medications to the children. If your child needs an **EpiPen** kept in school, there is an exception to this rule if explicit written instructions from your child's doctor and a parent note are provided. Teachers and administrators cannot administer antibiotics,



inhalers, pain or fever medications, etc. Please do not send your child to school having taken any fever reducer or other medication that masks symptoms.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **Emergency Information**

Emergency information with parents' home, work and emergency phone numbers (local relatives or friends) are kept on file in the office. We must have these prior to the start of school. Make sure to notify us if this information changes during the year. In an emergency we will attempt to contact you immediately. If we cannot reach you, we will try the other people you have specified. Please let them know you have designated them to make decisions in case of emergency.

### **Security and Emergency Evacuation**

In the event of a fire or building evacuation, specified fire drill practices are followed. Children practice these procedures monthly throughout the year. During our fire drills we walk to the back entrance of 80 La Salle just in front of the Thurgood Marshall Room (which is our evacuation point within Morningside Gardens). In the event of an emergency that requires us to leave Morningside Gardens, we will proceed to our neighborhood safe haven, P.S. 36 at the corner of Amsterdam and Morningside Drive (near 122 St.) Parents will be contacted if it is necessary to change dismissal plans.

## **III. EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

### **CLASSROOM CURRICULUM**

One of the things which makes CLC special is our mindful, creative approach to curriculum. Children's Learning Center is a play-based preschool committed to providing a nurturing environment where children feel safe to explore, create, take risks, and learn. We do not enter the year with a set curriculum, but rather ask open ended questions, present evocative materials, and provide children with the social tools to begin creating and interacting—yielding the sparks of our curricula. In this way, no two curricula are ever alike, and the path a curriculum takes depends entirely on the group of children and teachers leading the way. We view a child's social and emotional development as central to any preschool curriculum, and strive to help children talk about feelings, solve problems together, and learn skills of collaboration when they work.



We believe strongly that children are creators, and they learn best by diving in and using their senses. In the course of a day, children have deep experiences with art materials, music, the natural world, math, literature, and movement, all in the context of classroom explorations.



*Some of our recent emergent studies have included explorations on night, fabric and textile design, ice and color, dumplings, birds, recycling, and hip-hop.*

### **School Trips**

Our classes periodically go on trips, particularly during the nice weather. School trips are group experiences and are quite different from family visits to similar places. We depend on parents to assist us in making fieldtrips possible.



If you choose to attend/chaperone, please remember these guidelines:

- You are responsible for your own child, as well as one or two others. You must be with these children at all times. Teachers will provide you with a list of child partners.
- If you need to leave the group for any reason, even for a short time, please notify one of the teachers immediately.
- Help direct the attention of the children you are with to the adult speaking to the class.
- Help maintain a sense of order and decorum. This will help the children to focus.

## **CLC FUNDRAISING**

Each year, we count on the generosity of our parent body and alumni to enrich the lives of our children. There will be several opportunities throughout the year to make a donation to CLC, and take part in fun fundraising events.

***CLC depends upon the continued generosity and commitment of our parents,  
alumni and our neighbors.***

Families who are interested in helping the school raise funds, should see the Director for more information.

## **SCHOOL-PARENT COMMUNICATION**

CLC's intimate size allows for close and regular communication among parents, teachers, and administration. Each classroom communicates about daily activities via a white board posted outside the classroom by pickup, and in the Yellow Room, a clipboard notating eating, diapering, and sleeping as well. Teachers often talk informally with parents at drop-off or pick-up. Please remember that the teachers' primary responsibility during the school day, including drop-off and pick-up times, is engaging with the children. We ask that you keep unscheduled conversations brief during these transition times. Conversations that require more than a few moments or address sensitive subjects should be scheduled with the teacher.

If there are significant changes in your child's life during the school year, we ask you to please share them with your teachers and Director. A new caregiver or sibling, a parental trip, family move, death, illness, or divorce may affect your child's behavior and comfort at school. Being aware of changes at home will help teachers support your family, and make your child's school environment feel as safe and comfortable as possible.

***CLC sends home notices and emails regularly informing families of classroom information and upcoming events.  
It is critical that you read all correspondence from CLC.***

## **Reports and Parent/Teacher Conferences**

CLC provides parents with in-depth narrative reports on their child's experience in school at the end of the fall semester and with a shorter follow-up report at the close of the school year. These reports give a robust picture of growth, and reflect on all of the learning domains, including language and literacy, math, science, art, social and emotional development, and fine and gross motor skills. These are profound portraits of the children that are testimony to an intimate relationship between teachers and student that is unique to CLC.

There are **two** parent conferences each year to discuss your child's development and progress, one in late fall and one in the spring. If possible, it is best for any and all parents to attend. This is a time when parents and teachers share their understanding of the child, a time for parents to ask questions, and a time to revel in the work your child has created thus far at school.

In addition, as the need arises, meetings can be scheduled with the teachers, Director, or Learning Specialist. We ask that you make an appointment so your time will be uninterrupted. Informal exchanges at the door during arrival or dismissal are valuable, but anything requiring fuller consideration/discussion should be addressed via telephone or in conference, at a prearranged time.

## **Telephone, Texting, and Email**

If you wish to communicate with a teacher on a given day, you are welcome to call the office. Teachers may not be available to come to the telephone while they are with the children.

If your child will not be in school for any reason, it is necessary to notify the school by calling the office or emailing the Director and teachers. If you are late dropping off or picking up your child, please call to alert the teachers.

You can communicate with teachers via email if you do not need a timely response. Teachers do not check email regularly throughout the day so it is best to call the school. If you have anything you would like to discuss or have information you need a teacher to know, please call or write a note.

Teachers will stay in touch with you often through email reminders and newsletters but conversations about children need to be done on the phone or in person. Teachers will **not** address any substantive issue over email. During the day, we ask you please refrain from getting in touch with teachers via their cell phone numbers, as this requires teachers to unsafely disengage from the group.

Please do not call or text teachers' cell phones during the school day.

## **Questions, Concerns, and Respect**

CLC is an intimate community in which the feelings and ideas of all are important. If you have a question or concern about a classroom topic, such as what a certain classroom routine entails, how your child is engaging in a particular curriculum, or how a specific behavioral concern is being addressed at school, the first stop is your teachers, and we invite you to reach out to your teachers by setting up a phone call or meeting. The Director is also always available to speak with parents who have questions or concerns about anything having to do with your child's life or CLC. It is important during any discussion with teachers or administration for parents to communicate respectfully and appropriately.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION**

At CLC we believe that all children have strengths and challenges, and that children gain important skills by being in the classroom with different types of learners. Some children come to us already receiving support services and we welcome a variety of therapists into our school. We are available for team meetings with parents and therapists and will work together to support children in every way we can. If you would like a specialist or consultant will be visiting your child in the classroom, please speak with the director and your child's teachers to arrange a suitable schedule.

Preschool is often the first time a child spends significant time away from home, and as your child begins engaging with a wide array of new people, sometimes a question or concern will arise about an area of growth, either from teachers or from parents. In these situations, CLC works intimately with families to fully understand their children's needs, and how best to support them at school. The Director will always make herself available to talk through any concerns or questions you may have about your child's growth, help organize support for your child at school, or simply be a listening ear.

***Please make a meeting with the Director and teachers if your child receives services, and provide the office with a copy of any relevant paperwork such as an IEP. All in-school services are subject to scheduling approval by the Director, and must be approved before services begin.***

Situations may arise when a child needs additional support at school. The Director will work with families to obtain appropriate services such as help from a shadow or SEIT (Special Education Itinerant Teacher) through the Department of Education. If the child is not eligible for services through the DOE and needs this type of support, parents may be required to pay for these services independently. These decisions are made at the Director's discretion.

***We look forward to spending the year together and growing as a community. We hope that you will enthusiastically participate in your child's classroom and in our school. Have a wonderful year!***