

# The Acorn School of Charleston

95 Folly Road Blvd., Charleston, SC 29403

## Parent Handbook 2019-20

Welcome to The Acorn School of Charleston's Kindergarten program! 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 see our kindergarten program as the collaboration between teachers and parents, with each holding the healthy development of the children as the highest priority. We are honored that you have entrusted the care of your child to us.

In cooperation with each family, we strive to nourish the young child's natural sense of wonder and trust, fostering openness toward life and learning and preparing the ground for healthy lifelong development. Working in partnership with each other will help create a strong and nurturing community for all.

### 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.”

-Rudolf Steiner, A Modern Art of Education.

Creative play is at the heart of our early childhood and kindergarten programs. 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.

Play is child-directed and closely monitored by teachers as that social learning and imagination can be guided and supported in a way that is healthy for each

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child and the class. As the year progresses so does the children's ability to work and play together empathetically. While the children play, the teachers are involved in preparing snack, cleaning, sewing or other practical activities that the children are welcome to join or emulate. There are opportunities for the children to help set the table, grind the grains, fix toys and engage in seasonal crafts.

## School Hours

### First Day of School

The program will begin on Wednesday, August 21, 2019. The school year ends on Friday, June 5, 2020. We have more days scheduled this year to account for "hurricane days."

The first day will consist of an opening festival that begins at 11:00 am. All families, regardless of the days of the week your child will attend, are welcome.

### Arrival

8:00 to 8:15—The doors to the school will be unlocked at 8:00 am. Please enter the school and lead your child down the hall to the cubbies. Have them hang up their coats and use the bathroom. Then go into the classroom and meet Ms. Christi and Ms. Katie.

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.

### Parking

For safety reasons please park in the front parking lot and walk to the kindergarten with your child. Please do not allow your child to walk unattended in the parking lot.

### Dismissal

The early bird students will be dismissed at 12:00 pm. The school day children at 3:00. Please pick up the aftercare students by 5:00 pm.

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## Preparing for the Kindergarten

### Clothing

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.” 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 consumerism. Please refrain from dressing your child in clothing with media images on them. This includes cartoons, sport symbols and marketing slogans.

### 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 cloths 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 purchase a pair of comfortable, plain shoes without ties for indoors. Bring your child to school in sturdy outdoor shoes. Please do not purchase moccasins, clogs, crocs, slippers, shoes that have lights, or shoes with wheels.

### Outdoor Gear

The kindergarten class goes outside every day to play 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 room 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.

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## Festivals

The kindergarten celebrates four festivals during the school year. These seasonal rituals are an important part of the early childhood program. The festivals take place in the morning and we invite you to celebrate with us. In hosting these festivals, we have found them to nurture all participants regardless of age. The exact dates of these celebrations will be posted in the fall.

## Communication

### Communication to Teacher

We encourage your input, concerns and questions. Please use the teachers' email or voicemail at 843.501.2780 to request a time to meet.

### Parent Communication Number (843) 371-5454

This number is a parent only line and may be used to alert us to absences or late arrivals. Text this number with your message and Mr. Lee will respond.

## Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are held in October. Parents are asked to sign-up of a one-half hour session. This is a special time to share information about your child and to strengthen the bond between the adults who are responsible to the child's healthy development.

Ms. Sigrid has office hours in the afternoon each school day. Please reach out to her to set up an appointment.

## Class Meeting

Our adult only parent meetings allow the parent community time to get acquainted and for the teacher to lead the parents through activities that help them understand what goes on in the classroom. These are fun-filled festive events and we hope that every family will be able to attend.

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## Parent Enrichment Sessions

During the school year Dr. Stevens and Ms. Sigrid will be presenting a parent enrichment workshop on Waldorf Education. These events will explore the fundamentals of Waldorf Education and lead to a deeper understanding why this method is flourishing all over the world.

## Health

### Your Child's 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, please keep them at home. Please 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 picture making machines.

The cultivation of the child's imaginative capacity, their ability to form vivid inner images, is central to Waldorf pedagogy. 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.

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We are all striving human beings and hopefully, parents will choose to come in freedom to a position of enthusiastic support of the school's position on limiting our students' exposure to electronic media. We are stating our recommendations as goals, recognizing that parents are starting this journey with differing attitudes and rules about media use in their homes.

We suggest that parents embrace the following guidelines,

1. That families have a clear "electronics diet" for their children that restricts exposure to picture making machines
2. Ideally the children will have no media exposure during the week. This includes TV, the Internet, video games and smart phones.
3. That children be allowed limited media exposure on the weekend. These should be programs that the parents have prescreened with commercials edited out

You will find that this becomes easier and easier the more that families adopt these healthy habits. Not only because it will create a more peaceful mood in the home, but it will be easy to form bonds with like-minded families. You will feel comfortable knowing that your child's friends live with the same set of values. It is a work in progress, but one that is well worth the commitment.

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."

Again, we welcome you to The Acorn School and look forward to our upcoming year together.