

Pine Crest School Child Development Program Parent Handbook

WELCOME TO PINE CREST!

HOURS OF OPERATION: Pine Crest School (PCS) is open Monday-Friday year round, excluding closure dates listed on the yearly school calendar. Our program offers the following schedules: 9:00am-1:00pm, 9:00am-3:00pm and 8:00am-5:30pm. We also offer extended hours from 7:30am-8:00am, 8:00am-9:00am, 1:00pm-5:30pm and 3:00pm-5:30pm.

AGES: The children in our care range in age from 24 months to 6 years, or entry into Kindergarten. Our school embraces a mixed ages environment in the outdoor classroom, however the children are separated into different groups, based on age, in our developmentally appropriate indoor classrooms. Our three classrooms are divided between two-year olds in classrooms 3 and 4, three-year olds in classrooms 1 and 2, and four to five-year olds in classrooms 6, 7, and 8.

OUR MISSION: Pine Crest School is committed to instilling children with a love of learning while immersing them in a warm, nurturing, creative, stimulating, and safe environment. Pine Crest provides young children with a quality, early childhood education emphasizing an appreciation for the beauty that nature can provide. We believe in educating the whole child through a developmentally-appropriate balance of guided exploration, discovery, and free-play that prepares them for future success in school. The major areas of a child's overall learning experience at PCS encompass cognitive development, language and literacy, gross and fine motor physical skills, and social/emotional growth. Our educators encourage all aspects of a child's development while treating the children with respect, love, and genuine care.

THE EMERGENT CURRICULUM: The children are encouraged to develop their own unique interests, skills, and goals. Our indoor and outdoor environments are arranged to provide children with a wide variety of materials and equipment while giving plenty of space to be active. These spaces are divided into distinct work/play areas, each containing a diverse array of materials and learning opportunities where children are encouraged to make independent choices.

OUR GOALS: Our developmental goals enhance the four major areas of learning through a combination of child initiated and teacher-directed activities in order to balance the following developmental domains: social/emotional, fine/gross motor, cognitive, and language/literacy. These goals were developed to foster children's ingenuity, independence, and problem-solving abilities through a responsive, nurturing, and stimulating environment. Through sensorial exploration , discovery and skill acquisition from hands-on experiences, using large and small

muscles, and becoming self-sufficient, , children learn a great deal about the world around them.

DAILY ROUTINE: The daily routine is consistent and balanced between cooperative and independent activities. It provides for many types of interactions: small group, large group, one-on-one, adult-to-child and child-to-child. Our teachers and aides are all actively involved in the children's day and they are equal planners and participants in the program. Teachers approach children about what they are doing and give them time to respond and contribute to their conversation. Through a blend of teacher-directed and child-initiated projects, along with positive classroom guidance strategies, children build important relationships with their peers, teachers, as well as with their environment. It is important that our daily routine remain consistent so the children can anticipate what to expect, while also allowing for lots of exploration and project work. Indoor/outdoor, snack, lunch, story, and rest times follow a set schedule each day.

FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL: The first days of school are often a transitional period for our new children and families. You have chosen Pine Crest as the best fit school for your family, and the confidence you have in your decision will tremendously help your child feel comfortable in his/her new environment. Our Director will reach out to you about coordinating visits, which will allow everyone to become more comfortable with us and prepare your child for his/her first day. Our educators are experienced and qualified in helping families during this transitional period.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE START OF SCHOOL:

- Lunch and Water Bottle - A balanced lunch and reusable water bottle should be brought to school each day.
- Sun Hat and Extra Clothes - A sun hat and two sets of extra clothes (shorts/pants, shirts, underwear, socks) should remain in your child's cubby.
- Sunscreen to be kept at school
- A gallon size Ziploc bag of necessary supplies in case of an emergency: 1 disposable water bottle, non-perishable snacks, and extra clothes
- Comfort Items – A blanket and/or small “lovey” for your child's rest time at school. If your child uses a pacifier, we will allow him/her to use it while resting but will encourage independence from the item for the remainder of the day.
- Diapers and Pull-ups – For children that are not potty-trained or are in the beginning stages of toileting. Please bring diapers and/or pull-ups with your child's name clearly marked on the package.
- Completed Forms - All of your child's required registration, emergency, health forms, and immunization record must be on file before your child's first day.

CLOTHING: Our children spend a large portion of their time playing/working outdoors. Due to this reality, it is important for the children to be dressed appropriately and that parents be mindful of weather changes and the extra clothing it may require (e.g. layering, appropriate shoes, hats, jackets, rain boots, etc.). Always send your child in play/work clothes in which he/she can paint, get wet, or otherwise get messy. We encourage children to engage in process-oriented experiences without worrying about the appearance of their clothes. "Messiness" is often directly proportional to the amount of work and learning they are engaged in. This is often how children experience their senses and express creativity, and we celebrate these facts at Pine Crest.

We ask that you be practical in the clothing that your child wears, considering these facts:

- We won't ask children to wear smocks or other protective clothing, in part, to remove all barriers of entry into happy experimentation, which is our primary goal.

- Many learning activities require spontaneity and mess.

- Children often feel obstructed by seemingly simple requests to protect their clothing.

- Children are often impulsively drawn toward an activity only desiring to work for a few moments.

- If required to wear protective clothing, children will often decline because the hassle of changing can be more of an investment than they are interested in. This can result in a lost learning opportunity, often in the areas of development they avoid regularly and need to practice the most.

- The children's work is play-driven, emergent, social, emotional, physical, and sensorial. This means it is often spontaneous, messy, and very rough on clothing.

SHOES: We prefer children wear closed-toed shoes that they can place on and off by themselves. Sneakers are best for climbing, dancing, running, and all the many wonderful physical movements the children participate in every day. We also go on nature walks around our property that require sturdier shoes.

COMMERCIALISM: The children's clothing worn at school should not promote any commercialism including, but not limited to, super-hero or media/television characters. We value each child's individuality and unique personality, and do not want their clothing to influence their experiences at school.

LOST CLOTHING: All personal belongings should be labeled in permanent marker with your child's name. We can not be responsible for lost clothing.

NUTRITION/MEALS: A balanced and healthy lunch should be brought from home daily. We cannot warm up or cook the food you send, so be sure to pack a ready-to-eat meal. Pine Crest will provide the children with a mid-morning snack at 10:00am and an afternoon snack at 3:30pm. Great attention is paid to providing a nutritionally balanced snack. Snacks are

provided in compliance with the nutritional standards of the State Department of Education. A variety of food items will be served family-style each week, combining favorites with new tastes to encourage sensorial learning and an appreciation of variety. The current snack menu is posted each week for your convenience. All food allergies, sensitivities, and other dietary concerns/needs should be presented to the Director upon enrollment. *Because we want to model positive nutrition habits at school, candy, gum, and other sugary/non-nutritious foods are not permitted at school.*

REST and QUIET TIME: Children need to rest on a daily basis, for a certain amount of time, in order to be refreshed for the remainder of the day. Our daily program for each classroom includes a quiet time for all students. The older children in the upstairs classroom will rest from 1:00pm - 2:00pm (or longer if they nap) while the younger children in the downstairs classrooms will rest from 1:00pm - 3:00pm. Sleep is optional! Non-sleepers can listen to a restful story during this time or enjoy quiet activities on their mat.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES: California's Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing requires accurate daily attendance sheets in each classroom.

ALWAYS sign your child in with your full name and sign out with your full name.

If parents have/require an alternate pick-up person, advance notification and relevant information (e.g. name and telephone number) of those persons must be entered on the child's *Authorization List for Child Pick-up Form*. Children will not be released, under any circumstances, from Pine Crest School to any alternate persons without expressed prior written consent from their parent or legal guardian. This is a security and safety issue and we take this very seriously.

*Arrival/departure recommendations: Being that children, especially in Early Childhood, are creatures of habit, ritual, and routine, a consistent and regular arrival/departure time is preferred. Sensitivity to this reality greatly benefits both the children and staff alike, and also helps us in creating and maintaining a predictable, stress-free environment for the children.

*We understand the complex nature of parenting in the modern world and that circumstances may arise, on occasion, in which you may not be able to pick up your child on time. It is strongly recommended that an alternate pick-up person be designated for these occasions.

*Pine Crest considers you officially in charge of your child once you enter the outdoor play space or classroom. Upon your arrival, our educators will work with you and the other children to encourage a smooth transition as your child leaves for the day. There is a definite strategy to picking your child up at the end of their busy day. Please do your best to expedite the process since our program needs to continue on after your child leaves.

PARENT COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT: Throughout the year, our Director will post quarterly newsletters and send out regular email messages to keep all parents up to date. Each classroom has their own email for any daily correspondence as well as a communication application, Moment, where parents can message their child's classroom . Informal

communication between parents and staff may occur during each morning when the child is dropped off and each afternoon when the child is picked up. We provide many opportunities for social gatherings with families, including weekend field trips and monthly potlucks. Our Pine Crest Parent Association helps to organize many of our events, including: Parents' Night Out, Start of School Year Roundtable with teachers and parents discussing the Emergent Curriculum in action, Pumpkin Patch Visit to Petaluma in October, Winter Brunch Potluck in December, Book Club Discussion in April, Spring Outing in May, Summer Parent Work Day in July, and End of the School Year Graduation in August. Our school realizes the importance of parent involvement and encourages each family to participate in making their child's experience the best it can be.

PARENT CONFERENCES: At Pine Crest School, we believe that a healthy relationship with the family is always in the best interest of the child and his/her needs. We encourage open, honest, and forthcoming dialogue in regards to children, their development, and their families. We are always willing to listen and make contributions to the conversation, and hope that families feel the same. But there simply is not enough time to communicate everything we would like to share during these brief encounters with parents at arrival and departure times. So, in addition to the first meeting where we enroll your child, we encourage at least one conference each year, more if needed or desired. Our conferences allow for time to share information on the child's development based on our educator's ongoing observations and discussions.

PICTURES/DOCUMENTATION: We often take pictures of the children at play/work to be displayed at school or emailed to the parents. Documentation, in its various forms, not only builds memories but also serves as a great way for families to stay connected with what their child has been working on, discovering, investigating, and experimenting with at school. We post these photographs to both Instagram and Moment.

TOYS FROM HOME: Items, such as toys, and other personal, play oriented objects should not be brought to school. If an item is brought in, we will store it in your child's cubby for the remainder of the day. Pine Crest School prides itself on providing a diverse array, and wide spectrum of developmentally appropriate learning instruments and stimuli to choose from. Outside toys/objects can create unnecessary disruption, competition, and may not be developmentally appropriate for all the students in our mixed-ages school environment. Educational/cultural items believed to promote conversation, give insight into family life, or reveal the individual interests of the child, such as photos, books or something made by the child or family, are very much encouraged. If you are uncertain as to whether or not an object of interest is appropriate for school please consult our staff and we will be more than happy to let you know. *Toy weapons are not permitted on the premises for any reason. This includes guns, swords, knives, bows and arrows, etc. Weapon play is not permitted on school grounds.

This philosophy is enforced as an attempt to promote group harmony and healthy/non-violent resolutions.*

HOLIDAYS / BIRTHDAYS: Holidays are not promoted or a part of our curriculum at PCS, however, children are welcome to celebrate any and all holidays that hold significance to their family. We encourage cultural awareness to be brought organically into our school, and would be pleased if parents could share their traditions with our community. We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays at Pine Crest! Families may bring in a healthy snack (i.e. fruit, homemade low sugar muffins, or fruit juice popsicles) or non-food item for their child's class to enjoy. It is also wonderful for a family to read one of their child's favorite books to the class or bring that book in for the teachers to read in honor of your child and as a celebration. Please communicate with your child's teacher about your ideas and plans for birthday celebrations so they may make arrangements for the class.

GRADUATION: A celebration is planned, at the end of every year, to recognize the children moving on to Kindergarten. This graduation, with our educators and families, is followed by a potluck party. We are always sad to see the children in our program graduate and leave. However, it is an exciting time when children are ready to make that next big step to Elementary School. We wish all of our families the best in this transition and are here for support in any way needed. We want families to always feel welcome to come back and visit informing us on how the whole family is doing.

GUIDANCE vs. DISCIPLINE: Guidance provides a safe space for children to explore their unique interests, aptitudes, and limitations. Guidance gives them a supportive environment where they can be inspired to build a healthy self-concept and esteem, which we all know is paramount to their much-needed autonomy. Guidance allows for children to begin to trust and to actively enjoy the learning process - as directed by their own interests/needs. This education model is non-punitive by nature, and is governed by the notion that positive, child-centered experiences, when accompanied by options within limits, lead to more successful, healthy, happy children. Guidance uses concepts like trial and error, freedom of exploration, investigation, and discovery without reprimand. We believe that by guiding and facilitating, as opposed to strictly managing, we encourage the child to self-teach, learn, analyze, and reflect. We feel that discipline and punishment have no place in Early Childhood Education. We do not use "time-out" and corporal punishment will never be allowed. We believe that concepts rooted in compassion, understanding, and empathy such as redirection, modeling, and encouragement of verbal based communications, have proven to be more effective.

ADMISSION / ENROLLMENT: A non-refundable registration fee of \$40.00 per child will be payable at the time of application, which can be found online on our website. If open space is not available for your child at the time you are seeking enrollment, a waitlist is maintained. The registration fee will be used to secure a position on this waitlist. When you have been notified

of a space available for your child, the enrollment contract must be completed and a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$275 is due. During the enrollment process, the Director or other member of the Administration will schedule a meeting with each new child's parents to describe the Pine Crest philosophy. The policies and procedures of the program will be reviewed at this time.

One month before your child's first day, a deposit equal to one month's tuition is due and will be applied towards your child's last month at Pine Crest. All of the following enrollment forms must be completed and returned prior to your child's first day:

(1) Registration Form (2) Acceptance of Parent Handbook Policies (3) Identification and Emergency Information (4) Consent for Medical Treatment (5) Physician's Report, Immunization Record (including TB screening result) (6) Child's Pre-Admission Health History - Parent's Report (7) Parent's Rights (8) Personal Rights (9) Sunscreen Application Form

A few weeks before the child's first day of school, parents will be reminded of all items they will need to supply for their child.

TUITION / FEES: Tuition fees reflect annualized monthly payments regardless of holidays or vacation breaks. These days were taken into account when tuition was computed.

- A 10% sibling discount on a student's tuition is allowed when there are two or more children from one family enrolled at Pine Crest School.
- A non-refundable Registration Fee of \$40.00, per child, will be payable at the time of application.
- A non-refundable Enrollment Fee of \$275 is due at the time of initial admittance.
- One month before your child begins their enrollment, a deposit equal to one month's tuition is due and will be applied to your child's last month at Pine Crest.
- An annual Materials Fee of \$200.00, per child, will be required each year and will be due September 1st. This fee covers replacing materials the children will use throughout the year.
- A \$25.00 fee plus our bank charge will be assessed for any returned checks.
- Pine Crest School opens at 7:30am and closes at 5:30pm Monday through Friday. Failure to pick up children by closing time will result in an additional charge of \$15.00 per each quarter hour or segment thereof. These charges are billed and are due with tuition payment on the 1st of the next month.
- All tuition is due and payable on the 1st of the month and no later than the 5th of each month unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director. There will be an additional charge reflecting 10% of the total unpaid tuition, if full payment is not received by the 5th of each month. For every additional day thereafter that payment has not been received, a late charge equal to 1% of the total unpaid tuition will be accrued per day, including previously assessed late fees. For tuition remaining unpaid by the 21st of the month, and in a situation where a family has not come forward to discuss their financial difficulties, the deposit previously paid at the time of enrollment may be forfeited.

Tuition is payable using our online tuition system, Curacubby, or by check, cash, money order, or cashier's check. Credit terms are not available. Any account that is charged for two returned checks will require that all future payments be paid through Curacubby or by cash, money order, or cashier's check.

- Credit will not be given on days your child is absent, for illness, vacation, or any other reason.
- For any changes in tuition rates, parents will be provided 6 months notice.

WITHDRAWAL POLICIES: Notice of intent to withdraw a child from enrollment during the school year must be submitted to the school Director in written form. Individual requests to be excused from financial responsibility for the remainder of the school year (i.e., when a parent's job transfers the family out of the area) will be considered by Administration as long as we have a replacement for your child. The earlier you hand in your written request, the higher the chance you will be excused from your contract.

Should your child leave Pine Crest earlier than the time agreed upon, PCS shall use their best efforts to fill the newly available space as soon as possible, but you are responsible for paying your child's tuition payments in full for two months after a signed early termination form is received OR until your child's space has been filled, whichever is sooner. Tuition cannot be suspended to accommodate family vacations and/or extended leaves of absence.

TERMINATION POLICIES: Pine Crest School reserves the right to terminate service if a child is unable to benefit from the program, if the program is unable to meet the needs of the child or family, if the child or family is disruptive to the program, or if the child or family is aggressive towards any children or adults. Two weeks written notice of enrollment termination will or can be given to parents for any of these reasons. Pine Crest School reserves the right, under extreme circumstances, to require immediate dismissal.

HEALTH AND SAFETY/ ILLNESS: In the best interest of all children and teachers, we must limit attendance to well children only. Children are not permitted to attend Pine Crest with any communicable diseases. A child will be sent home if it is determined that they are not well enough to participate fully in the program. Pine Crest School realizes the difficulty in finding alternative care for sick children. Adhering to our illness policy is for your child's protection, the protection of all the children, and staff. Observing our illness policy will maintain a healthy childcare learning environment. We have set these standards as a necessary part of our overall program to ensure an optimal environment for your child. Planning, in advance, to provide substitute childcare for your child when sick will avoid last minute worries. Please call or email us when your child will be absent. Children must remain at home until they have had a full day (24hrs) being symptom-free. *Most importantly, your child must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning.* The teacher may refuse to accept a child if the child seems overly tired or appears to be ill. Generally, if your child is too sick to go outside and play, then your child is too sick to attend school. Also, notify the staff if your child has been given prescription or over-the-counter medication, as it may affect her/him while at school.

MEDICATIONS: Forms for Parent's Authorization to Administer Over-the-Counter or Physician-Prescribed Medication (including non-aspirin) must be filled out before we will administer any medicine (Community Care Licensing form LIC 9221 and LIC 9166, if applicable). All prescription and over-the-counter medications must be in their original container(s). Prescriptions must display the pharmacist's label with the doctor's name, patient's name, and directions for administration. All medications will only be administered according to the dosage directions printed on the label or as otherwise authorized by a physician.

EMERGENCY: Pine Crest School has emergency procedures in place. Although these procedures may never be used, it helps to offer parents peace of mind knowing that their children are taken care of in all situations. In the event of an emergency concerning your child, we will make every effort to contact you immediately, after calling 911. If you cannot be reached, we will act according to your instructions on the signed medical consent form. Pine Crest School emergency information and policies are posted in clear view in each classroom. Fire and earthquake drills are conducted regularly. We ask that all families provide the school with a small emergency bag to be kept with our supplies. Items to be included: non-perishable granola bars and other food items, water, and an extra set of clothes. In the event of a disaster, such as fire or earthquake, or if the premises were to become uninhabitable for another reason, we would move our location to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley. We are welcome to call on them if the need arises. All the children would be cared for until their parents or emergency contacts could pick them up.

SUNSCREEN: Because we spend much of our time outdoors, using the dynamic variability of nature to inspire our students' learning experience, we do request that you apply sunscreen on your child prior to arrival at school. *Rule of thumb is - Better to be safe than sorry and expect that your child will be exposed to direct sunlight every day at school. Repeating the application of sunscreen will be assessed on an individual "as-needed basis" as long as we have your child's non-prescription sunscreen form on file.*

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

*Pine Crest School may arrange for additional enrichment classes to be offered to children (Music is offered once per week for all of our classes and the cost is included in the tuition).

*Parents agree to notify Pine Crest School in writing or in person if anyone other than an authorized person will pick up the child.

*Parents must report any change of address, telephone, or employment to Pine Crest School immediately.

*Pine Crest School does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability with respect to the enrollment of children or the hiring of staff.

*All children and adults involved at Pine Crest School must be able to function meaningfully without harming themselves or others.

*The Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing has the authority to conduct any authorized inspection, and announced or unannounced site visits during the facility's normal business hours. DSS has the right to interview staff and children without parent consent or advance notice.

*To ensure the safety of all of our families, please never leave children unattended in your car in the parking lot. Our teachers are more than happy to help you if you are ever needing assistance.



Please print, sign and hand in this portion of the handbook with all required forms

ACCEPTANCE OF PARENT HANDBOOK POLICIES:

I/we, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of CHILD'S NAME _____ DOB _____
have received and reviewed the PINE CREST SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK and agree to
comply with all the regulations and responsibilities stated therein.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN

DATE