



## Parent Handbook

### **Contact Information**

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### **About Mighty Minds, Little Hands**

Welcome, Bienvenue, Bienvenidos! Mighty Minds, Little Hands International Preschool is owned and operated by Michael and Ghizlaine Taft. The Tafts founded MMLH in 2006 as a home daycare and expanded to a school facility at its current location on Angus Rd. in 2007. The school is now home to 75 children and 18 staff members.

Ghizlaine has taught French and Spanish in private and public schools, preschool through grade 12, since 1992. She has a B.A in elementary and secondary education, as well as Romance languages, and an M.S. in counseling. Michael works for his own construction company based in Albemarle County and ensures that the business runs properly and is well maintained at all times.

Mighty Minds enrolls children age 6 weeks to 5 years. The preschool is run on the building's second floor, where lead teachers implement daily lesson plans in each of the three classrooms. The lower level is home to two infant rooms and a toddler room.

The school is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. year-round except for major holidays and occasional staff training days (as noted under "Holidays").

## **Staff Education, Training and Certification**

All directors and lead teachers have completed the required M.A.T. training hours through the Virginia Department of Social Services to administer medication. All staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid. Lead teachers have college/university degrees in subjects relating to child care. Each classroom includes a Spanish-speaking teacher to maintain the parallel Spanish immersion, and some teachers are fluent in French, Russian and Swahili as well.

## **Philosophy: “We shape the mighty minds of tomorrow.”**

These formative years are the most crucial in every child’s life. Our program guides each child in building a solid foundation of self-esteem and confidence. From this, other good things will naturally flow: healthy personal traits such as independence, responsibility and maturity, and good social habits such as friendliness, kindness, cooperation and communication. When a child is treated with respect, he learns to respect himself and others.

We are dedicated to giving your child the individual attention, approval and affection that he or she needs to build this foundation. Our primary goal is to help a child say, “I like being me!” Our secondary goal is to create peace of mind for parents while their children are provided with a home away from home. Our third goal is to introduce children to the language and culture of other countries.

The center is open for parents to visit and observe their children at anytime. All children, regardless of ethnic background, race, color or religious beliefs, are equal and welcome at the school.

## **Programs**

Our infant programs include children age 6 weeks to 18 months. Our toddler program is for children from 18 to 24 months. These programs are less structured and are more geared towards promoting socio-emotional and physical development.

Our preschool program includes children age 2 to 5 years. They are grouped according to age and each child’s activity level. We use the “Complete Resource Book,” written by Schiller and Hastings, and the Early Childhood Development curriculum. In addition, all lesson plans include French or Spanish immersion according to your choice. Curriculums are approved by the director.

## **Admission and Enrollment Policies**

To enroll a child, parents must contact the director to schedule an informational visit and tour. If there are no openings, parents can opt to join a waiting list. Parents must submit a nonrefundable registration fee and complete an enrollment form. Enrollment options include full-time or part-time care. Full-time consists of five days per week and cannot exceed 10 hours per day. Part-time options include three days (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), two days (Tuesday, Thursday) or five days a week for four hours in the mornings. Parents must bring their child's physical examination form (within 30 days) with documentation of immunizations and the child's birth certificate upon enrollment.

## **Parent Conferences**

In addition to receiving daily activity reports about each child, parents are invited to engage in teacher conferences three times during the year. The first conference is a scheduled orientation prior to the child's entrance into a new classroom. It is an opportunity for parents to share information about their child with the teachers. The second conference is mid-year. Each child will receive a developmental observation to be discussed at the scheduled meeting. The last meeting is at the end of the year. This is an optional meeting based on the child's progress and needs.

## **Parental Involvement**

The center has an open-door policy; the custodial parent has the right to be admitted to the center whenever the child is in care.

## **Meals and Snacks**

As part of the tuition fee, we serve a well-balanced breakfast/snack, including milk, between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. The school also provides an afternoon snack and drink served at 3:15 p.m. A menu is posted in the hallway.

Parents/guardians are responsible for packing a lunch. Perishable items must be given to the supervising staff member immediately upon arrival or placed in the refrigerator. All unused portions of food will be discarded and/or returned to the parents at the end of each day. All meals, beverages and bottles must be labeled with your child's name and the date.

## **Food and Supplies for Infants and Toddlers**

Infant formula/milk must be prepared by the parent and brought to the preschool. Bottles and sippy cups must be supplied by the parents and clearly marked with the child's first and last name and date. Parents/guardians must supply one crib sheet, one blanket, diapers and wipes. Parents are responsible for picking up the leftover baby food from the teacher or director at the end of the day. Food not picked up at the end of the day will be discarded.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is taken daily. Please notify the preschool if your child will be absent. Parents/guardians are required to sign in and out for their children daily on the form located outside each room, which ensures a fast head count.

Parents must indicate their hours needed for care upon enrollment and cannot switch without giving the school prior notice. In order to change contracted hours, parents must offer written notice one week in advance to the director. There are no tuition discounts for weather-related closings or absence due to illness, vacation days, staff days or other days missed.

The preschool closes promptly at 6 p.m. Please pick up your child and be ready to leave before closing. Teachers are not scheduled to care for children after 6 p.m. An overtime charge of \$1 per minute per child will be added to your account to compensate the staff member working after hours.

Please provide written authorization if anyone other than the parent/guardian picks up your child. A picture I.D. will be required of alternate caregivers. If a child is not picked up by 7:30 p.m. and the preschool has not been contacted, Child Protective Services will be notified.

For security, adults who are picking up or dropping off a child should not leave their engine running. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times when entering or leaving the building.

Parents may NOT drop off their children during nap time (noon to 2 p.m. in the toddler and babies' room or 1-2 p.m. for preschoolers).

## **Dress Code and Cubbies**

Parents/guardians should provide an extra change of clothing, socks and underpants to the preschool (tags should be labeled with your child's name). Children should wear clothes that are appropriate for the weather. Shorts or tights are required under dresses. Children need indoor

shoes and outdoor shoes. During the summer, please bring a bathing suit and a towel for water play as needed.

Each child is assigned a cubby. It is the parents' responsibility to check cubbies daily to ensure that extra clothing is available for emergency use.

## Transportation

MMLH does not provide transportation.

## Holidays

We view holidays as a valuable part of our multicultural curriculum. They can provide an opportunity to encourage positive feelings about other cultures and educate children about how other children celebrate special occasions.

The preschool is closed in observance of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving (and the day after), Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If any of these holidays falls on a weekend, the Friday before or Monday after will be observed. When Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fall on a Sunday and Monday, the preschool will be closed on Monday and Tuesday.

The preschool will also be closed on Good Friday for **staff day**.

## Inclement Weather/School Closings

Parents can register to receive text messages or e-mails about school delays and closings through [rainedout.com](http://rainedout.com).

*To receive messages via e-mail, go to:*

[https://www.rainedout.net/team\\_page.php?a=ed5b596461910a5b38aa](https://www.rainedout.net/team_page.php?a=ed5b596461910a5b38aa)

*To receive messages via text:*

- Start a new text
- In body, text: children
- Hit send and it will prompt you to: "to"
- Send message to 70359

If your wireless provider is Ntelos you will *not* be able to receive the messages via text. When you register, the company will send you a receipt that welcomes you to [rainedout.com](http://rainedout.com). We are unable to monitor your registration because of privacy issues, so notify us that you have registered.

In the event of icy road conditions, the preschool reserves the right to close for the day, to have late openings or early closings. MMLH will notify all families in the event of closing during the day. Closing or delay information is also sent to NBC 29, CBS 19, ABC 16 and WAHU 27. You may call the preschool and check the recorded announcement as well. There are no tuition discounts for weather-related closings.

## **Fire and Emergency Drills**

Fire evacuation drills are conducted monthly and natural disaster (i.e. tornado) drills are practiced twice a year. Everyone must quickly exit the building during a drill and remain at the designated areas until the "all clear" signal is given. We ask that you do not enter the building while we are conducting a fire drill. You may join your child's class at its designated spot.

## **Medications**

Prescription medications and over-the-counter medications can be given with written authorization from the parents. The preschool's medication authorization form must be completed before any medication shall be administered. Medication must have the original label and packaging, the child's name, dosage, amount and times to be given listed on the container. Parents/guardians should provide medicine and forms to a staff member.

Skin products (diaper ointment, insect repellent and sunscreen lotions) also require parental authorization. The medication must be consistent with the manufacturer's dosage, or a physician's approval must be obtained. Long-term medication requires a physician's authorization, parent's authorization and the prescription label. Parents must pick up the medication(s) before the expiration date or it will be discarded immediately.

## **Emergencies**

If an emergency should arise with a child due to illness or accident, the preschool will contact a parent or guardian, the child's doctor or a listed emergency contact. If we cannot reach you or in the case of an immediate emergency, MMLH will contact the rescue squad and/or have the child taken to the emergency room with a staff member. Any expenses incurred are the responsibility of the child's family.

An emergency plan is available for review in the director's office.

## **Immunization Record**

Proof of a child's immunization record is mandatory by state law, with no exemptions.

## **Illness Policies and Procedures**

Mighty Minds, Little Hands International Preschool is a "well childcare facility." This means if your child is not feeling well, for any reason, you must make other arrangements for his/her care until he/she is feeling well and/or is no longer contagious. If a child becomes ill at the preschool the parents/guardian will be notified immediately.

Parents are not allowed to bring a sick child to Mighty Minds, Little Hands. Sick children expose other children, parents, staff and their families to the spread of their illness. Sick children want care from their parents in the comfort of their own homes. **Please read over our exclusion policy below** and note that once excluded, your child must be out for **24 hours** before he/she will be allowed to return to school (note exceptions for longer exclusions below). **We will not take a doctor's note or have your child return before the 24-hour period.** Your cooperation is extremely important to ensure that we will be able to provide all of our children, families and staff with a happy and healthy preschool.

A child who is not feeling well is easily frustrated by other children and may hit, bite and cry more than usual. A sick child requires extra attention, which takes a teacher away from tending to the needs of other children, making for a stressful, unsafe environment. Therefore, the following policies will be strictly enforced, for the health, well-being and safety of all concerned.

### **Guidelines Regarding Illness/Suspected Illness**

Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Children, staff or parents who have the symptoms listed below **WILL BE EXCLUDED** from the child-care setting for **24 hours** and until: 1) a physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious agent or they are no longer a threat to the health of other children at the center or 2) the symptoms have subsided.

## **Fever**

Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater. A child needs to be fever-free for **24 hours** before returning to school. That means the child is fever-free without the aid of Tylenol or any other fever-reducing substance. Parents will not be allowed to visit and give Tylenol and go back to work. You must take your child home.

## **Diarrhea**

If your child gets diarrhea while in our care, he/she will be sent home after **two** loose stools. He/she is not to return to school until a **24-hour** period has passed and he/she has been free of any diarrhea. Likewise, if your child gets diarrhea at home, he/she is not to come to school until a **24-hour period** has passed.

## **Runny nose**

- Thick yellow or green mucous requiring wiping more than five times per hour.

## **Respiratory Symptoms**

- Difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing.
- Child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sound after he/she coughs.
- Child is unable to lie comfortably due to continuous cough.
- Coughing that results from or induces vomiting.
- Barking cough
- Any other signs of respiratory distress.

## **Eye drainage**

White, yellow or green mucus draining from the eye(s): The child is excluded until he/she has been on treatment for 24 hours or after 24 hours has a doctor's note stating he/she is no longer contagious.

## **Strep Throat / Tonsillitis**

If the child is diagnosed with strep throat or tonsillitis by a doctor after child is sent home, the child must be out of the center and on medication for **48 hours**.

## **Vomiting**

One or more episodes of vomiting while in school or within the previous 24 hours at home.

**Skin Rashes** - contagious rashes such as:

Varicella (chicken pox), measles, rubella, roseola infantum, scarlet fever. Any child having such symptoms is excluded until all lesions are crusted or one week after onset.

Erythema Infectuosum (fifth disease): if your child has a rash and fever he/she will be excluded for **24 hrs**. Fifth disease is no longer contagious after the rash has appeared.

Any suspicious, undiagnosed rash will require a doctor's note for the child to return to school if he/she continues with lesions.

### **Infected Sores**

Sores with crusty, yellow or green drainage which cannot be covered by clothing or bandages. A culture will be required if cellulitis or an abscess is diagnosed.

### **Impetigo and Ringworm**

A common contagious skin infection transmitted from child to child. To prevent spreading, an infected child will be excluded until treatment begins AND lesions are **not in the pustular stage**.

### **Other Symptoms**

- Cranky or fussy for no apparent reason
- Rapid breathing, difficulty breathing
- Severe sore throat with a fever
- Pain in stomach with fever
- Pain in stomach (constipation) when going to the bathroom/potty
- A cut that cannot be covered and is running pus or blood
- Severe allergic reactions
- Fainting spells or dizziness
- Headaches

A child who shows symptoms of ear infection such as crying, tugging at the ear, fever, irritability and wants to be picked up constantly.

### **Allergies**

Notify us if your child is allergic to any foods, such as milk products, peanuts or peanut products, or he/she is allergic to any insect bites. Information on a child's allergies is posted in the classroom. Parents/guardians should also provide a bottle of Benadryl or an epi-pen prescribed only by your doctor in your child's classroom. All medicine will be kept in a container away from the children.

## **Picking Up Your Ill Child**

You are required to pick up your child within **30 minutes** of notification. If you cannot be reached, then your emergency contact will be called. Parents should provide current phone numbers where you or your designated emergency contact can be reached.

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## **Toilet Training**

We are happy to assist your child with toilet training. In order to ensure success, parents and staff need to communicate to be consistent with their approach. Children's underwear with pull-ups will be used for toilet training. Diapers are not appropriate for toilet training.

## **Helping Your Child Adjust to Preschool**

When you bring your child to the preschool, please be quick. You are making the process harder for both you and your child if you stay around for too long. The first two weeks of preschool are usually the hardest for your child. We suggest that you leave a small photo album with pictures of the family. We discourage bringing your own toys because they might be broken. The preschool has many toys, but we also welcome toy and book donations.

## **Religious Celebrations and Traditions**

We celebrate special days (Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day), with a big emphasis on Christmas (i.e. putting up stockings, learning Christmas carols). Voluntary prayer is said before snacks and meals and the Pledge of Allegiance is recited in the mornings.

## **Discipline**

1. At Mighty Minds, we promote children's self-discipline, responsibility and cooperation with others. Our discipline techniques include:
2. Using limits that are fair and understandable for a child's level
3. Providing children with reasons for limits
4. Giving positively worded directions
5. Modeling or redirecting children to acceptable behavior
6. Helping children to constructively express their feelings and frustrations to resolve conflict

## 7. Time-out will be used as a last option

Discipline never includes verbal abuse or physical punishment such as spanking or rough handling. If a child's behavior becomes seriously disruptive to the classroom, the parent will be notified and a parent/teacher conference will be scheduled to solve the problem.

## **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

By law, we are mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If your child has sustained injuries, please notify the staff so that we can document it and prevent any misunderstandings. Please contact us immediately regarding any questions about the care of your child. Child abuse and neglect will not be tolerated by either parents or staff at the preschool.

## **Birthdays**

Birthday parties are a wonderful experience for a child. A child's self-esteem is developed in celebrating that special day. At Mighty Minds, Little Hands, we love to recognize each one of our children on their birthday. Many children are on special dietary requirements or restrictions. Please ask your child's teachers if there are any children with special food restrictions. For example, if any children have dairy allergies or restrictions, pareve (non-dairy) cakes are available at many local grocery stores.

All parties must be approved by the administration. Please obtain a birthday form in advance from the front office. This form will be used to notify the teachers and administration of what items are being brought as well as when the party will be taking place. Parties are allowed in the afternoon during snack time (please supply a snack, i.e. cake or cupcakes, ONLY in order to make it easier to observe any dietary restrictions of children in the classroom). At Mighty Minds, Little Hands, we strive to have a nutritious and healthy eating environment. Please be creative and select healthy snacks when sending in special treats for holidays and other celebrations.

Entertainment may be brought in for the class or school to enjoy. Please arrange this with the administration prior to the celebration. Please help us keep this occasion simple but meaningful for your child.

## **Termination of Services**

Parents/guardians must give a one-month (four-week) written notice stating their reason for termination before a child can be withdrawn from the preschool. Failure to do so will result in paying one month of tuition before withdrawal.

The preschool reserves the right to stop caring for a child and will give the parent a written two-week notification for the following reasons:

1. Failure by the parents to meet financial obligations on a timely basis to the preschool.
2. Child has difficulty adjusting to the preschool.
3. The child's behavior endangers other children, staff or self.\*
4. Parent/guardian refuses to seek assistance for chronically ill child.
5. Parent/guardian refuses to cooperate with or is not supportive of the preschool and its program.
6. Parent/guardian's failure to provide documents required by the State of Virginia as outlined in the Parent Handbook.
7. Parent/guardian's behavior threatens and/or endangers children and/or staff.
8. Parent/guardian's behavior maligns preschool reputation.

*\* MMLH reserves the right to immediately cancel services in order to protect other children enrolled.*

I \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name), have read the Parent Handbook.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this form to Mighty Minds, Little Hands International Preschool.*