



Family Handbook 2025-26 School Year



Dear Family,

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing The Willow School. We are committed to providing a caring, enriching, and safe environment for your child. We recognize the trust that parents place in us when they give us the opportunity to care for and educate their children. We appreciate your trust. A mission of The Willow School is to create an exceptional experience for young children and their families. We believe that children thrive in a caring and enriching environment that supports them in feeling comfortable, confident, and safe. We also believe that the basic building blocks of learning are play, curiosity, creativity, questioning, and imagination, and we believe that schools which embrace this theory of learning have the best influence on children's positive social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

The Family Handbook should answer most of the questions that you may have about The Willow School. However, if you have additional questions or concerns that are not addressed in the Family Handbook or if you need additional clarification about the information provided here, please do not hesitate to let us know. We are convinced that a cornerstone of a successful and strong program for young children is a well-informed, satisfied, happy family! Our goal is to make sure that you feel good each and every day about having your child at The Willow School. Thank you again for choosing The Willow School. We look forward to getting to know you and your child!

Sincerely,

Teresa Cole
Founder & Executive Director

Admission & Enrollment

The school runs year-round from August through July and follows the City Schools of Decatur calendar as much as possible. The school is open from 8:00 am – 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday except for scheduled school closings as noted on the school calendar. The school accepts students from 12 weeks through 5 years of age, as well as children up to 10 years old for our afterschool and summer camp programs.

Registration for the school year begins in January of each year for the following August. The Registration Fee (\$500) must be paid at the time of registration in order to secure a spot for the upcoming fall. After acceptance by the family of enrollment and the payment of the registration fee, the school will hold placement for the child and the policies of this handbook apply to any changes in enrollment status or other situations that may arise from the time of enrollment until the new school year begins.

All families must fill out necessary paperwork and sign the Memorandum of Understanding, which will outline the family's responsibilities to the school and the school's responsibilities to the family. All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and accounts must be current prior to your child's first day of attendance and/or the first day of the new school year. Currently enrolled children and their siblings will have first priority for available spots. All other spots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to those families that need 5-day care. A limited number of part-time spots will be filled from the wait list should they become available.

The school retains the right to make decisions regarding enrollment, classroom makeup and placement based on the needs of individual children and/or the larger school community. Upon enrollment to The Willow School it is the responsibility of the parents to keep the school informed of any changes in personal information, including but not limited to, phone numbers, email addresses, residential addresses and place of employment.

Non-Discrimination

At The Willow School we embrace an anti-bias environment. Equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/guardian political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Anti-Bias Environment

We believe that anti bias education is the essence to building stronger relationships with ourselves and others. We believe that these relationships will promote knowledge, cultivate love, embrace change, and facilitate cooperation. It is our hope and desire that our differences will be the foundation of our unity.

Our intent is to embrace each individual with an open heart and an open mind. We support and celebrate cultural diversity, gender equality, and children and family rights. We, as educators, facilitators, and influencers, encourage and welcome provoking dialogue, daunting challenges, and refreshing resolutions. We intend to implement a stance of freedom and acceptance in our school and in our individual lifestyles. We will advocate for each member of our community; we will aim to resist bias; we will ask for accountability; we will foster growth without judgment; and we will fight against injustice.

Inclusion

The Willow School believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in early childhood education programs. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

Certification

The Willow School is licensed by and complies with the rules and regulations of Bright From the Start – Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Classes/Programs

The Willow School has the following classrooms and programs with the following designations (ages represent age of children at the beginning of the school year in August):

- Infant Class – 2 classes with 10 children ages 12 weeks through 11 months.
- Toddler Class – 2 classes with 10 children ages 12 months through 23 months.
- Twos Class – 2 classes with 12 children ages 24 months through 35 months.
- Early Preschool Class – 1 class with 12-14 children ages 30 months – 42 months.
- Preschool Class – 2 classes with 15-18 three-year-old children. Children entering this class must be potty trained and turn 3-years-old by September 1.
- GA Lottery Pre-K – 2 classes with 20 four-year-old children. Children must turn four by September 1.
- Forest Class – 1 multiage class with 14 children ages 3.5 - 5 years old. This class is outdoors for a large portion of the school day.
- Elementary After School Program - Children in 5 - 10 years old are picked up from school and spend the remainder of the afternoon at the Willow School. Children in the after school program must be picked up from the Willow School by 5:30 pm when the school closes.
- School Age Summer Camp - Families with children 4-10 years old can choose from eight weekly summer camp sessions during June and July. These sessions are open to enrolled students, as well as, children not enrolled in the school during the regular school year. Registration opens in late December and is on a first come, first served basis.

Enrollment Options

The Willow School has the following enrollment options:

- Full day - The full day schedule is 8:00 am - 5:30 pm.
- School Day – The school day schedule is 8:30 am until 3:30 pm (8:00-3:00 for pre-k class). Families choosing this option must drop off and pick up their child(ren) at the designated times.
- Part time – Part time options include 3 days per week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) or 2 days per week (Tuesday/Thursday). Tuition for these options include access to the full hours that the Willow School is open.

Tuition & Fees

All tuition payments are due on the first business day of each month. Families have the option of choosing a 12-month schedule (year-round care) or a 10-month schedule (no care needed for June and July). The monthly tuition and registration fee are the same for either option, but these

options allow the school to plan for staffing during the summer when some families may not need childcare.

Tuition is based on an annual budgeted amount and divided into equal monthly payments. Tuition is due even in the case of school closure for any reason. No tuition reductions will be made for absences due to family vacation, illness, etc.

Fees and monthly tuition rates are denoted in the following table:

	Fees
Application Fee	
One-time, non-refundable fee	\$50
Registration Fee	
Due at time of enrollment and yearly thereafter, non-refundable.	\$500
Tuition Deposit	
One-time fee, due July 1 if starting school in August, otherwise at time of enrollment. Deposit will be applied toward last month's tuition upon receiving 30-day notice of withdrawal. Deposit is non-refundable without 30-day notice.	\$1000
	Monthly Tuition
Full Day (8:00 am – 5:30 pm)	
Infants	\$1995
Toddlers/Twos/Early Preschool	\$1950
Preschool/Forest Class	\$1850
School Day (8:00 am - 3:30 pm)	
Infants	\$1725
Toddlers/Twos/Early Preschool	\$1650
Preschool/Forest Class	\$1575
Part Time (8:00 am – 5:30 pm)	
M/W/F (limited availability)	\$1250
T/TH (limited availability)	\$960
GA Lottery Pre-K Charges	
School Day (8:30 am – 3:00 pm)	No Charge
Meal Fee (includes breakfast, lunch & afternoon snack)	\$100
Aftercare (3:15 – 5:30 pm)	\$450
Daily Rate (for breaks and mini camps)	\$90 per day
School Age After School (2:30–5:30 pm) (Currently providing pick-up from Winnona Park Elementary, Avondale Elementary and the Museum School)	
5-Days Per Week	\$500
4-Days Per Week	\$450
3-Days Per Week	\$400
2-Days Per Week	\$350
School Age Summer Camp	
Enrollment for summer session opens in late December. Registration information can be found on our website at https://willowschoolga.com/programs/camps/ .	

Georgia Lottery Pre-K Program

The Willow School offers two Georgia Lottery Pre-K Program classrooms. The school day (8:30 am - 3:00 pm) is provided at no charge to families.

Pre-K Families that need after care will be charged for that time based on the chart above. The meal fee for 2025-26 is \$100 per month and includes morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack.

The Daily Rate is \$90 for those times when the pre-k program is closed according to the school calendar, but The Willow School is still open. For example, the pre-k program will follow the City Schools of Decatur (CSD) calendar. There are times when CSD are closed, but The Willow School is open. Families that need care on those days can attend school and pay the daily rate.

Payment

Payment of tuition is always due in advance on the first business day of each month with no deduction for absences, family vacations, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond the school's control. Payment is due as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Late Payment Charges

Tuition payments are due on the first business day of each month. If payment is not received by the 5th of the month, a late fee of \$20 will be added for each day that it is late. If your account has not been paid in full by the 15th of the month enrollment may be forfeited.

The school retains the right to take measures to collect unpaid balances either through small claims or collections. If these measures become necessary the family is responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions are charged a fee of \$35. This charge may be collected electronically.

Late Pick-up Fees

Late pick-up negatively impacts children and staff. Parents should plan to arrive at the designated pick up times for their child's class. If you realize you are unable to pick up your child on time, please contact the school as soon as possible to alert us.

Children must be picked up by 3:30 if your child is school day and 5:30 if full day. Children picked up after 3:45 will incur a late aftercare late fee of \$30. Children picked up after 5:30 pm will incur a late fee of \$10 plus \$1 per minute for each minute late. Late pick-up fees will be added to the families account and are due when invoiced.

Withdrawal

If a family decides to withdraw from the school for any reason, 30 days written notice is required. The amount of the tuition deposit paid at time of enrollment will be applied toward the last month's tuition. If the tuition deposit is more than the amount of tuition, the balance will be refunded.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records are transferred internally. If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request signed by parents with instructions as to where the records should be sent is required.

Photographic Release

Photographs of children enrolled at the school may be used to document children's development and learning and/or be represented on promotional materials and/or professional development initiatives for The Willow School. Photographs are not used for any such purpose without the express written consent of a child's parent or guardian.

Curriculum & Philosophy

The Willow School's vision of the possibilities for schools is strongly influenced by the experiences of the infant/toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. As we look to the example of education in Reggio Emilia, we see a strong expression of how families and educators can create schools for young children that reflect the values of the community. To be a "Reggio-inspired" school means having a vision of children and families as strong, competent, and capable.

Inherent in our beliefs and values is the conviction that as citizens of a community, children and their families have a right to high-quality educational programs. A child enters the world as a curious, capable human being who seeks relationships and connection with others. Schools should be places where the innate strengths of young children are nurtured. Schools should be places where children are supported in growing to their full potential within an environment that is interesting, engaging, and responsive. Schools should be places where professional educators are happy, receive satisfaction from their jobs, and are viewed as valuable contributing members of the community in which they work. Schools should be places where families feel welcomed, involved, and respected for their individuality and unique points of view.

Learning Environment

Our learning environment reflects our belief that children are inherently curious, seek relationships with others, and construct their knowledge and understanding of the world through their active engagement and experiences with their environment and the people, materials, and experiences within it.

As a reflection of our educational philosophy, we provide a learning environment rich in materials and possibilities. Of the utmost importance are children's active explorations in the environment. Children's formation of ideas through experiences and processes of inquiry are valued. Rich and varied materials are provided for the purpose of experimentation and creative expression. Children are challenged to research their theories of how things work and are encouraged to engage in a wide variety of experiences. Children are frequently engaged in small group interactions where each voice can be heard and various ideas explored and results

negotiated. Each child builds skills not only in traditional cognitive, gross motor and social categories, but also in the areas of problem solving, original ideas and strength of conviction. A primary task of the educator is to provide an environment that is filled with unlimited possibilities – possibilities that encourage children to make discoveries, to experiment with their own ideas, and to interact in meaningful ways with other people. Educators are constantly engaged in a process of observation and documentation in order to develop the best possible educational environment for children. The environment is intended to be responsive to the interests and needs of children while simultaneously encouraging children to develop in ways that are projected by educators.

Each classroom, as well as the school as a whole, acts as a democratic model where all participants interact with one another in a spirit of mutual respect and an attitude of care.

Outings & Field Trips

Routine transportation to and from home is not provided by The Willow School. However, field trips provide unique opportunities for learning and are scheduled frequently. Generally, field trips are taken with small groups of children to strengthen and deepen both the experience and the relationships among participants. These trips may include walks in the neighborhood, trips to parks and other natural areas, visits to nearby restaurants, shops or museums, and outings to various sites around the City of Atlanta such as Zoo Atlanta, The Atlanta Botanical Gardens, etc. Children are supervised closely and accounted for at all times during field trips. Classroom educators communicate with families regarding details of upcoming trips. A permission slip must be signed by a parent in order for the child to participate. Parents are encouraged and welcome to attend field trips with their children.

Willow School staff will provide transportation for field trips in the school van, which meets all Bright From the Start requirements for appropriate authorization, documentation and equipment to transport children. If parents wish to chaperone or otherwise attend field trips they may transport their own children. If a parent is asked or otherwise wishes to transport additional children not their own, the school must have written permission from the child(ren)'s parent or guardian.

Inserimento

Translated from the Italian, inserimento literally means “insertion” and is a concept of introducing children to the school environment and the initial process of the child’s adjustment into a new community. Upon enrollment, a child and his/her family are invited to spend some time with the teachers in the classroom. Depending on the needs of the child and the family, these visits generally last around 30 minutes. This is an opportunity for conversation between parents, teachers and the child within the context of the school environment.

Inserimento is an important time for children as they develop new relationships with other children, adults, and the new environment. We believe that the process of relationship building is most important for young children; because of this, we treasure this time of inserimento.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Our educators are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. When hiring educators we take a variety of traits into consideration such as educational background, experience, dedication to the profession and willingness to participate in the mission, vision and values of the school.

We believe that a unique aspect of The Willow School is the strength and commitment of the educational professionals who choose to work at the school. In order to support educators at The Willow School in their continuing evolution as professionals, we make a strong commitment to ongoing professional development for all of our staff, professional development that exceeds the minimum requirements of Bright from the Start. Please be aware that this type of professional development requires occasional absences of educators from the classrooms. We hope that the strength and nature of the experiences for your child and you while at the school is evidence of the power of our strong commitment to regular professional development.

Staff to Child Ratios

The Willow School provides student/teacher ratios below those allowed by the State of Georgia. Low ratios are an important part of providing quality care, an engaging learning environment and strong adult/child relationships. The following are the maximum ratios for each class. These ratios may fluctuate slightly depending on the time of day and staff shift changes, but are accurate for the majority of the day.

- Infant Class – 1:4
- Ones Class – 1:5
- Twos Class – 1:6
- Preschool Classes (3-year-olds) – 1:9
- Pre-K and Forest Classes (4- and 5-year olds) – 1:11

Staff to child ratios will never exceed state maximum allowed by Bright from the Start as noted below:

- Infants– 1:6
- One-year-olds – 1:8
- Two-year-olds – 1:10
- Three-year-olds – 1:15
- Four-year-olds – 1:18
- Five-year-olds – 1:20

General Policies and Procedures

Personal Belongings

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. The school is not responsible for lost or misdirected items that are not properly labeled.

What to Bring for Infants (12 weeks to 12 months)

- Enough bottles of breast milk or formula for one day's feedings should be brought already prepared to school each day. Bottles should be clearly marked with the child's name and date. Empty bottles are returned to the family each day.
- Baby food as needed.
- A supply of diapers and wipes (enough diapers for at least one week and 3 packs of wipes per month).
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes.
- Any comfort items that your child needs such as pacifiers, lovies, etc.
- A bag for empty bottles.

What to Bring for Toddlers

- A sippy cup for water or water bottle.
- Three packages of wipes per month if your child is full time (two packages if your child is still in diapers).
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes (more if your child is potty training).
- A lovey for naptime if needed.
- Raincoat and boots.

What to Bring for Preschool, Pre-K and Forest Class

- A water bottle.
- At least 2 complete changes of clothes.
- A lovey for naptime if needed.
- Raincoat and boots.

Absence

If your child will be absent from school, please send a message via Brightwheel to your child's classroom before 9:00 a.m. Children arriving after 10:00 am must have written documentation of why they are late (i.e. doctor's note). Children will not be admitted to school after their classroom lunchtime for any reason. This also applies to picking up early and returning to school after 12:00 pm. Please plan to keep your child home for the day if arrival time will be later than the beginning of the classroom's scheduled lunchtime.

Year-Round Calendar and School Closings

The school is closed periodically for traditional school holidays and to provide professional development opportunities for the entire school staff.

Families should consult the school calendar for dates when the school is closed. Since tuition is based on a yearly budget, there are no discounts for school closings.

Families may opt for a 10-month or a 12-month enrollment at the school. If a 10-month enrollment is preferred, the family can take June and July away from school with no tuition due and still maintain their enrollment for the new school year.

Holiday Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and the beliefs of children, families, staff and community. While the school does not promote specific holidays, we welcome and encourage families to share important traditions with their child's classroom, keeping in mind the cultural and traditional aspects of the celebration instead of the material and commercial aspects.

Birthdays

Within the classroom, we plan a small celebration for each child on his/her birthday. Parents are welcome to celebrate birthdays at school with their child, but the school does not allow party elements such as sugary treats, balloons, or other decorations. Gifts and/or goody bags should not be brought to school.

Rest Time

Time to sleep and rest is essential for young children. All classes will observe naptime and children are expected to sleep and/or rest on their cots or mats. Children that do not sleep after 30 minutes of quiet rest time will be able to read books or other quiet activities while their friends sleep. **Teachers and staff will not actively prevent children from sleeping at naptime as sleep and rest is important to development.**

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep according to the safe sleep policy provided by Bright from the Start and adopted by The Willow School. A copy of this policy is provided to each family as part of their new family packet. After lunch, the toddler, preschool and pre-k classes participate in a quiet rest time. Children older than 12 months sleep on mats or cots with a sheet, blanket and pillow and any comfort item sent from home.

Diapering

Diapering is an important process in the daily life of the infant and toddler classrooms. Diapering is a time for one-on-one interaction between the child and teacher. The process of changing diapers is always done in a comfortable and respectful manner.

The Willow School will follow all guidelines for cleanliness and hygiene as outlined by Bright from the Start. Staff will wash hands before and after they diaper a child. The child's hands will also be washed with soap and warm, running water after each diaper change. If diaper ointment is to be applied to the child during diapering a medication form must be filled out by the parents giving permission for application of such products.

After each diaper change the changing table will be disinfected with a bleach water solution to prevent the spread of germs and illnesses. Diapering procedures are posted above each changing area within the classrooms.

Toilet Training

An important factor in making the toilet learning experience at school as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. Generally, this happens around the age of 20-30 months. Consistent practice between home and school creates the greatest success.

The Willow School will follow all guidelines for cleanliness and hygiene as outlined by Bright from the Start. Staff will wash hands before and after they assist a child during toileting. The child will also wash their hands with soap and warm, running water after using the toilet. Toilets and potty seats will be disinfected with a bleach water solution after each child to prevent the spread of germs and illnesses. Hand washing procedures for staff and children are posted above each sink.

Guidance

We have a fundamental belief that children are powerful, competent, and capable. We also believe that children grow and develop through rich and meaningful relationships with others. We embrace respect as one of our core values. Our philosophy of guidance reflects these beliefs.

We believe that children are born with the desire and ability to be in relation with others. The adults in a child's life – especially family members and educators – have a responsibility to support children in developing positive social skills.

At The Willow School, we employ several strategies of guidance, including effective communication, acknowledgment of children's feelings, praise for positive behaviors and interactions, redirection from challenging situations, and natural consequences. We create "calming spaces" in each classroom that are designed to give children a place to go to be quiet and find calm when necessary.

Under no circumstances will any of the following methods of discipline be allowed at The Willow School:

- Corporal punishment, including spanking, shaking, jerking, squeezing, or physically indicating disapproval
- Shaming, humiliating, or other verbal abuse
- Withholding food as punishment
- Retaliating, or doing to the child what they did to someone else
- Labeling the child (i.e., indicating a child is a "bad" boy or girl)

Communication & Family Partnership

Communication Between School and Home

The Willow School values the communication between school life and home life. In an effort to reduce paper waste, most communication will be sent through Brightwheel. The school will provide information about the children's experiences at school in the following ways:

- Each child will have an individual portfolio. The portfolio will contain individual work of the child, photos and/or videos that show the child's work processes, notes made by teachers and other documentation about the child's experiences at school. The portfolio will be a living and ongoing body of work that will follow the child throughout their matriculation through the school. Parents are encouraged to look at and contribute to the portfolio often.
- The infant and toddler classrooms use the Brightwheel app in order for the teachers to make note of the sleeping, eating and diapering of their child each day. The teachers may also make notes regarding activities, general mood of the child, or upcoming events. Please note that every effort is made to document happenings in "real time" but on some days this is not possible and the app will be updated during naptime or at the end of the day.
- The school will utilize Brightwheel for sharing and communicating with families regarding information specific to their child's class. This site will contain daily experiences, photos, messages, project stories, and special calendar events.
- Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled twice per year. Conferences will be scheduled intermittently throughout the school year so as to not disrupt the school schedule. However, if a parent has concerns or wants more information about their child's experiences at school they may request a meeting with teachers at any time during the year.

NOTE: Staff are encouraged not to share personal cell phone numbers and email addresses. Staff are also not allowed to use personal cell phones or other devices while in supervision of children. Please DO NOT text, call, or otherwise communicate with staff using their personal devices. All communication related to school activities should be sent through Brightwheel.

Family Participation

The Willow School does not have mandatory volunteer requirements. However, we strongly believe that parent participation in the child's educational life strengthens the child's educational experience. Parents are welcome and shall have access to the center at any time in which children are in the care of the school. We strongly encourage family participation and involvement in the daily life of the school. Because we value the unique contributions that parents can make to their children's experiences and to our community as a whole, we encourage involvement in the school as much as schedules allow.

There are diverse opportunities to volunteer. Possible opportunities for family participation in the daily life of the school include the following:

- Visiting your child's classroom
- Chaperoning field trips
- Participating in a weekend workday
- Share a special talent or skill with the school (music, photography, art, yoga, etc.)
- Read a book to the class
- Organize social events

The opportunities for family participation are endless, so use your imagination! When you participate in the daily life of the school, you enrich your child's experience at the school while developing a stronger connection with the rest of the school community.

Class Parents

Each class will have one or more class parents. The class parent will organize events and communications for the class including, but not limited to:

- Coordinate class socials.
- Organize meal brigades for families with new babies or a death in the family.
- Coordinate with other parents holiday and birthday gifts for teachers.
- Organize teacher appreciation week events.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Morning Drop-Off- 8:00-8:45

Morning drop-off will be in the school's lobby. Morning drop off begins at 8:00 am and ends at 8:45 pm. If you arrive at school after 8:45, please ring the door and a staff member will meet you and escort your child to their classroom. Unless arranged in advance, children arriving after 10:00 am will only be admitted to school with a note from the doctor or prior approval. **Children will not be admitted to school after the beginning of lunchtime for any reason.**

Afternoon Pick-Up 3:00-3:30

Afternoon pickup will take place inside the school. Someone will be at the front door between 3:00-3:30 for those picking up Pre- K students and school day students. You will pick your child up from the piazza or classroom. Once you pick your child up, please proceed to the lobby to exit the school. If you arrive after 3:45, please ring the doorbell, and someone will let you in and bring your child to the lobby.

3:00-3:15- Pre-K picks up from the classroom.

3:00-3:30- Sprouts and Seedlings will enter through the Infant door.

3:00-3:30- Downstairs Piazza- All School Day Students
Wildflowers, Sunflowers, Honey Bees, and Dragonflies

3:00-3:30- Upstairs Piazza- All School Day Students
Rainbow, Bluebirds, Sunset, and Butterflies

Afternoon Pickup-3:45-5:30

You will pick your child up from the lobby. Please ring the doorbell, and someone will let you in. Late pick up fees will apply for children not picked up by the designated times.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child is released only to you or to those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child is required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts are made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions are made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after two hours we are not able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy

of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the center picking up your child are important times of communication between the school and home. In order to make the best use of these opportunities and to meet your child's needs during these times of transition, we ask that you not use your cell phone at any time while inside the center or during carpool drop off or pick up.

Health Policies

The Willow School does not provide sick childcare.

If your child exhibits any symptoms below he/she should not be brought to school:

Fever	All children and staff will be screened prior to entrance of the building, and shall be excluded if they have a fever above 100.4. Anyone with a fever should be fever-free for 48 hours without fever reducing medication before returning to school. If the child develops a fever of 100.4 or higher during the school day, parents will be contacted and the child will need to be picked up within one hour. If the child is sent home with fever during the school day they cannot return to school until they are fever-free for 48 hours.
Influenza(flu)	Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Any person with a positive influenza diagnosis must be excluded from the school for 7 days from the diagnosis.
COVID-19	Refer to the school's pandemic policy
Pinkeye	Children will be sent home if there appears to be an unusual amount of discharge from or irritation to their eye(s) and must be seen by a doctor before returning to school. If the diagnosis is BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS children must have received at least 48 hours of treatment. If the diagnosis is VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS your child may return AS LONG AS THERE IS NO DISCHARGE.
Strep Throat	The child should return only after 48 hours on medication. The child must be showing signs of improvement and be willing to eat and drink.
Diarrhea	Children will be sent home if they have 2 runny stools in 1 hour or 3 runny stools during the school day. The child should not come to school until he/she/they has had no diarrhea or vomiting for 48 hours and is eating normally.
Vomiting	Children will be sent home if they vomit and must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school (after the day of observation) children must be symptom free with no vomiting for 48 hours.
Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease	The child should not return to school until they are fever free for at least 48 hours and all sores are scabbed over.
Runny Nose/ Cough	If your child's runny nose requires frequent attention from the teacher, if the child is irritable or running a fever, or if the mucus is any color other than clear, he/she/they should not be in school. If your child's nose is due to seasonal allergies, we would require a note from the doctor stating such.
Head Lice	The child may return to school when free of ALL nits. In order to remove nits, it is usually necessary for the child's hair to be well combed with a special nit removal comb after treatment with the medicated shampoo. Guidelines for treatment of head lice are available from the Director or from your county health department.
Rash	Any rash other than a common diaper rash or skin irritation will require that child to be sent home for an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor in writing of exactly what it is. They may return to school based on that written doctor's evaluation, and clearance that it is not contagious.

The above list is not exhaustive. In order to protect other children and teachers from becoming ill, children will be sent home if they are exhibiting symptoms and obviously not feeling well. Children returning to school should be symptom free. The school will follow the policies above regardless of recommendations from the doctor's office. Classroom teachers have full authority to apply this policy and will inform parents if their child is ill and needs to be removed from school.

By keeping children home when they are ill, the spread of illness among our school community is greatly reduced. This means fewer illnesses for children, teachers, parents, and other family members, fewer visits to the doctor, and fewer days lost from work for parents. If your child becomes sick while at school you will be called to take him/her home. While awaiting parent's arrival the sick child will rest on a cot in the office with the director or other personnel. Sick children should be picked up no later than 1 hour after notification by the school that the child is sick. If the parent notified cannot be at the school by the end of 1 hour, other arrangements should be made for the child's pick up. If we cannot reach a parent, we will notify the emergency contact person(s) listed on your enrollment application.

Communicable Diseases

Any time a child or employee is ill with a contagious disease, they should remain at home until such time as they are no longer contagious. When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We take care to notify families via email and/or printed letter about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

Medications

It is the general policy of the school not to dispense medicine except in life-threatening situations. In these circumstances the following guidelines must be met:

Prescription Drugs:

1. Before any prescription medicine is dispensed, a written and signed authorization must be provided that includes date, name of child, name of medicine, prescription number (this must *a/ways* be included), dosage, date, and time of day medication is given.
2. Medicine must be in its original container labeled with the child's name.
3. Parents must provide and label any necessary equipment for the dispensing of the medicine.
4. Teachers will pay attention for any adverse reactions and note them on the medication authorization form. Parents will be notified immediately if their child has an adverse reaction to a medication.

Non-prescription medications

Non-prescription medication (advil, tylenol, benadryl, etc.) will not be dispensed without written instruction by the child's pediatrician. Non-prescription medication shall not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received. A medication authorization form must be filled out by parents before any medication can be dispensed.

Non-prescription topical ointments

The Enrollment Agreement includes a section for the authorization of the administration of non-prescription topical ointments, such as diaper cream, sunscreen and insect repellent. The school will not administer these items unless authorized by the parent on the Agreement.

Safety Policies

Clothing

Dress your child for school in clothing that is washable and allows for freedom of movement. Children in diapers should wear clothing that is easily removed for changing. **Please do not send children to school in clothing that you would not want to get soiled or stained as your child will be engaged in “messy” activities such as painting, outdoor play, sand, water play, clay, gardening, etc.** Outfits that the child can manage alone will make the day go more smoothly. Heavy leather boots, complicated belts, and buttons often pose problems for children at school.

Children should wear shoes to school that facilitate climbing and running and other such activities. **Children should not wear flip-flops or other loose or backless shoes.** Supportive shoes will help eliminate injuries during the school day.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

All classrooms participate in outdoor play. Weather conditions such as cold/hot temperature, light rain, damp, after rain conditions, etc. do not preclude outdoor play. Children will utilize rain gear in rainy or damp conditions. Administrators and teachers may adjust outdoor play in these situations as needed.

Outdoor play does not occur in the following conditions:

- if the outside temperature is greater than 99°F or less than 36°F degrees
- during heavy rain, thunder, lightening, or stormy/high wind conditions
- if the air quality rating is 50 or below.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

In case of extreme weather, the school follows City Schools of Decatur with regard to school closings. In the case of severe weather (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes) please listen to the local news and/or radio station. If City Schools of Decatur are closed The Willow School will also be closed. For the safety of school employees, many of whom live some distance from the school, there will be no exceptions to this policy.

Closing Due to Physical Plant Defects

In the event of loss of power, loss of water, or other physical plant defect that prevents the school from opening on time or at all, or necessitating early closure, families are contacted by text, telephone and/or email. If any of these conditions happen during the school day and are deemed to persist for longer than one hour and in the case where proper care of the children beyond that time will not be possible, parents and/or emergency contacts will be called to pick up children as soon as possible. Appropriate staff will remain at the center until all children are picked up. The school will maintain emergency supplies order to provide basic necessary care for at least 4 hours.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. A trained caregiver administers first aid in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of

swelling or needs medical attention, you are contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, 911 will be contacted at once and the child will be transported immediately by ambulance to a Children's HealthCare facility. Parents and/or emergency contacts will be notified at once. If an authorized person cannot be contacted or arrive before the ambulance a proper escort from the school will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

A Special Note about Biting: As upsetting as it can be for children and adults, biting is a normal stage of development that is common among young children. Most young children bite and/or are bitten by another child at least once when they are in group care settings. Often, whether their child was the child who bit or the child who was bitten, parents experience strong emotional reactions to biting. Again, please be assured that biting is normal developmentally in children who are experiencing discomfort due to teething, do not have the verbal skills to communicate their frustrations, and are unable to exhibit self-control that would limit their reactions in frustrating situations.

When biting happens, our first response is to take action immediately to provide appropriate care for the child who was bitten. We also respond to the child who has bitten with strategies designed to help him/her learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus is not on punishment for biting, but on developing effective behaviors that address the reasons for biting.

Notification of a biting incident is given in written form to both the family of the child who was bitten and the child who bit. We work together with families to keep them informed and to develop strategies to address the situation.

For further information on our approach to biting, we recommend the excellent article entitled "Dealing with Biting Behaviors in Young Children" which is available online at <https://athealth.com/topics/dealing-with-biting-behaviors-in-young-children/>.

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group either at the school or on a field trip, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within five minutes, 911 will be called and the family will be notified.

Evacuation of School

In the event of an emergency at the school, such as fire, gas leak or other emergency requiring evacuation of the premises, evacuation of students and staff would occur in the following manner:

- Director gives evacuation order or alarm is sounded.
- Director contacts authorities by calling 911.
- Teachers in each class evacuate students from building according to procedures practiced in monthly drills.
- Teachers proceed away from the building down the sidewalk toward the playground to a safe distance from the building and take a head count.
- Director takes contact information from the school files.

- If possible, Director places message on school number and/or via e-mail indicating evacuation and location of evacuation.
- Director calls each family and/or emergency contacts to let them know of the situation and the location of the evacuation.
- Children are kept at the evacuation site until an adult from their contact list picks them up.
- Parents sign out children as they are picked up.
- Staff members will remain until all students in their class have been collected.

Emergency Procedures For Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather (i.e. tornado, hurricane) the following procedures would be followed:

- Director will notify the teachers to prepare for severe weather or alarm will sound.
- Teachers will direct children to the inner most areas of the school (bathroom and hall way) and away from windows and doors.
- One teacher from each classroom will double check sign-in sheet to make sure all children are accounted for.
- Director will collect emergency information from the office.
- All children and staff will remain in emergency shelter until severe weather advisory has passed.
- Director will report injuries and/or damage to authorities by calling 911.
- Parents are notified by telephone and/or email of the situation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency determines appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with all fire safety equipment required by Bright from the Start – Georgia Department of Early Learning and the Dekalb County Fire Department, including hard-wired fire alarms, pull stations, emergency lighting and evacuation cribs for the infant room. The Willow School conducts a monthly fire drill and reviews fire evacuation plans with children and staff on a monthly basis.

Nutrition Policies

The Willow School offers a full food program of quality meals and snacks for children 12 months and older. Food prepared at the center meets or exceeds guidelines described in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the state requirements for food service. Meals are prepared fresh daily and, to the extent feasible, include fresh, whole and organic ingredients. Meals are vegetarian utilizing protein sources other than meat and poultry.

The school's food program includes the following:

- **Morning Snack** – Served between 9:00-9:30 am. Morning snacks consist of foods such as fruit, cheese, granola, yogurt and milk.
- **Lunch** – Lunch is served between 11:30 am – 12:30 pm. The teachers work with each child to introduce new foods and to ensure nutritious and pleasant dining.
- **Afternoon Snack** – Afternoon snack is served around 2:30 after nap/rest time. Snacks include fruit/vegetables, grains and proteins.

Infant Feeding Plans

Families of infants (children between 3 and 12 months) are responsible for bringing breast milk, formula and appropriate food for their child. The educators work closely with each family to create and maintain an infant feeding plan and introduce new foods according to each child's development. "Baby" food may be store bought or prepared at home. All bottles and baby food jars and/or containers must be clearly marked with the child's name and the date it was brought to school. Any bottles left at the end of the day will be discarded or sent home.

Meal Time

Meals at the school are served "family-style" in the classroom and include the participation of the children. At meal time, the table is set with plates and flatware. The food is placed in small bowls from which the children can help themselves. Children are encouraged to serve themselves. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted on the school bulletin board and online at our website for viewing by families.

Food From Home

The school serves a variety of freshly prepared, nutritious and delicious food. We strongly believe that the more exposure children have to a diverse menu the more likely they are to be willing to eat a balanced and healthy diet. Therefore, we do not allow food to be brought from home for snacks or lunch.

Food Allergies or Special Diets

If your child has a need for a special diet we will work with your family to ensure that your child's dietary needs are met. If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually. Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

The handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are completed.

Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received and reviewed The Willow School Family Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center administration any questions I may have regarding any policy, procedure or information contained in The Willow School Family Handbook.

Name of Child(ren)

Recipient Signature

Date

Printed Name