

Highland Mill Montessori Parent Handbook

Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District

2025-2026



Highland Mill
Montessori

Highland Mill Montessori School

Parent Handbook 2024-2025

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Highland Mill Montessori School Parent Handbook

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PHONE:

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Home page: [HMM Webpage \(CMS\)](#)

Email: highlandmill@cms.k12.nc.us

SCHOOL HOURS:

8:45- Doors Open

9:15- Tardy Bell (students must be inside the school before the bell rings or they are tardy)

4:00 - 4:30 Dismissal

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Vision

At Highland Mill Montessori, we will create a Montessori culture of high academic standards in a peaceful learning environment emphasizing strong moral values, passion for lifelong learning, responsible independence, celebration of diversity, and positive contributions to the global community. We will build partnerships with families and the local community to extend our support network for students.

Mission Statement

Highland Mill Montessori fosters a peaceful and caring environment by embedding elements of grace and courtesy throughout the curriculum. We provide individualized, rigorous instruction that addresses unique learning styles and encourages curiosity and creativity while focusing on the Montessori curriculum to prepare student leaders for a changing global community.

Our Beliefs

- Our children will learn in a culturally diverse Montessori environment that is well prepared and is safe and orderly
- Our children will learn at the highest level when family, student, and community are in partnership
- Our children will develop socially and emotionally while excelling academically as a result of having well trained Montessori teachers

History of Our School

The school community of Highland Mill Montessori began in the fall of 1996 at Billingsville Montessori School on Skyland Avenue. The program opened with federal magnet funding supplemented by state and local funds. The initial year included Pre-K through 3rd grade Montessori program and 4th- 6th grades in a traditional school setting. Two diverse programs were housed in the same building. Several staff members came from Amay James which was the first Montessori program in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. They brought with them authentic experiences as Montessori educators and provided a rich sense of the Montessori culture. Parents and staff worked together to prepare the school by painting classrooms, preparing garden areas, and setting up classrooms with furniture and materials. It was the start of a wonderful community where parents and staff work together to provide the best learning environment for all of the children attending the school. In August 2003 the program was moved to the newly built Highland Mill Montessori School on Clemson Avenue.

General Notes

Montessori referred to the primary child:

"Supposing I said there was a planet without schools or teachers, where study was unknown, and yet the inhabitants—doing nothing but living and walking about—came to know all things, to carry in their minds the whole of learning; would you not think I was romancing? Well, just this, which seems so fanciful as to be nothing but the invention of a fertile imagination, is a reality. It is the child's way of learning. This is the path he follows. He learns everything without knowing he is learning it, and in doing so he passes little by little from the unconscious to the conscious, treading always in the paths of joy and love."

~Dr. Maria Montessori

Montessori spoke these words regarding the elementary child:



"The secret of good teaching is to regard the children's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim, therefore, is not merely to make the children

understand, and, still less to force them to memorize, but so to touch their imagination as to enthuse them to their innermost core."

~Maria Montessori

Classroom Environments

Teachers take much care in arranging the classroom with opportunities for working independently, working with a partner, or working in a small group. Our classrooms are orderly and well-cared for by staff and children. Each classroom is well supplied with Montessori materials which are displayed for immediate use by members of the classroom community. Teacher Assistants are available as CMS allots them.

Staff and Children Take Ownership of Managing Behavior

Environments where there is much independent work, require an underlying structure set up with the teacher's vision of what works for his/her particular group of children. The physical organization of the classroom is essential for facilitating children's freedom to choose work and to move about, as they choose behavior that is appropriate for work in their classroom.

Each child should come to school with a good understanding of what is appropriate behavior. Based on this understanding, each child makes decisions and choices of how to behave. We expect behavior that shows respect for others and respect for materials in the environment. We hope to help each child realize a positive self-image as a human being with the growing potential for becoming a contributing member of our school and society.

Montessori did not agree that rewards are always the answers to positive behavior. Our modeling of appropriate behavior, asking children to reflect on the impact of their decisions on others, and redirecting the child as they experience decision-making situations will lead to pride in one's accomplishments without always receiving a tangible reward.

Work on independence and concentration begins in the primary grades with four and five year olds. It is essential that our children have this early opportunity to practice working independently and making choices. In addition, we offer valuable and exciting learning opportunities and establish environments that target each child's developmental interests. As each child matures, it is expected that periods of focus will increase along with appropriate choices regarding behavior.

Children's Work Day and Uninterrupted Work Time

The first six weeks of the school year will be an important time for your child to adapt to the Montessori philosophy of learning. During these first six weeks, our teachers will be helping your child learn how to work as a respectful member of our school community, develop the art of concentration, work independently, become familiar with classroom and school procedures, and learn to help others. This will

take time and school-wide focus. This time period is known as the normalization period in Montessori and is integral in preparation for a successful school year. As a parent/guardian, you play a major role in helping your child have a successful beginning school year experience. The only exception to visits prior to October 13th are for birthday circles officially scheduled with the teacher ahead of time. You can help your child by following the tips listed below:

- **Classroom and Cafeteria Visitation:** We are currently not conducting observations due to the 6 week normalization period. This will allow your child six weeks to become adjusted to the classroom/school and to develop the independence necessary to be a successful learner in a Montessori school. Once we are able to resume observations at the end of first quarter, parents will be welcome to visit our classrooms and can set up a day/time by emailing Ms. Beth for observation (beth.leo@cms.k12.nc.us). School visitation for the 25/26 school year, will open the week of October 20th. These observations are conducted in the tutor room where families are able to see their children working without distracting the classroom environment. Teachers are aware of the observations as Ms. Beth must ensure the observation time works with the classroom schedule. If you are interested in visiting the classroom, please contact the teacher to set this up. Upon arrival, please sign in, get a visitor's pass, and request to see Ms. Beth. We will not be scheduling observations past the first week of May. For cafeteria visits to eat with your child, please limit visitors to 1-3 people (let us know if you have an extenuating circumstance), sign in, and the office staff will let you know when the class is ready for you to join them in the cafeteria.
- **Communicating with Teachers:** Our teachers will gladly make an appointment before or after school hours to schedule a conference. Questions and/or concerns may be addressed at any time by leaving teachers a message in the front office (980 343-5525) or e-mail/Parent Square. Every attempt will be made to contact the parents within 24-48 hours. Teachers will each share their communication procedures and some teachers may be able to communicate with you during the day, but it is not mandatory as they are monitoring and instructing students throughout the entire school day. Parent Square will be the main platform for communication from the school.

Students begin their day's work as soon as they enter the classroom. This first activity may take various forms in different classrooms. Some children may begin by reading or writing. Some may work on the classroom environment or prepare their first work for the day. Others may help the teacher prepare lesson set-ups. Some may go to other classrooms to listen to readers. Some may reach for their on-going research project and seek out their partner to begin work. Work in our classrooms is dynamic and ongoing, not filled with isolated lessons. We expect that attitude and behavior will remain positive when work and assignments are purposeful and meaningful to each individual so that she or he is not just passing time until the next segment of the day, but the student is spending time on work worthy of his time and effort.

During work time we strive not to interrupt the children's work period. Children need time to complete a work cycle – including time to consider choices, choose a work, work through it, and put it away. As children work toward independence, they need time to make mistakes and correct them and to reach a sense of mastery on their own.

Materials and the Montessori Curriculum

Our classrooms are well supplied with a full range of Montessori materials. Classrooms are prepared with materials in each of the content areas – history, physical science, earth science, life science, mathematics, geometry, and language arts. Montessori materials are available to children throughout the day related to assignments or work choices made by children.

Special Area Classes

We offer special area classes throughout the week. We have specialized art, music, science and physical education teachers. The media specialist and technology facilitator work on fixed and flexible sign-up schedules so students can accomplish research projects on a schedule that meets their needs.

Teachers' Credentials

Every CMS employee is licensed in North Carolina with NC Teacher Certification. We strive to begin the year with Montessori-trained teachers. When this is not possible, teachers take formal Montessori training during the school year with an accredited Montessori organization and have a mentor to meet with regularly as well as school-wide Montessori professional development and coaching from facilitators.

In addition, we follow a CMS Montessori Alignment Playbook and all teachers in a level plan together weekly utilizing this resource.

Regarding our staff, children, and parent community:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." ~Margaret Mead, American Anthropologist

Academic Aspects of School

Progress Reports

See school calendar for reporting periods for each quarter. Teachers are required to meet with parents at the end of the first school quarter to review your child's progress. Parents will be contacted by the classroom teacher to set up a conference date and time. Parents will be afforded every opportunity to participate. Parents must conference with the classroom teacher prior to November 14. Failure to attend the conference is a violation of the HMM Learning Compact. Parents and teachers can request a conference at any time during the year in order to enhance communication.

Homework

In general, homework is not assigned unless a work/assignment from their work plan was incomplete at the end of the week (this does not include primary), but reading at home is an expectation and a practice that improves reading skills and builds a lifelong love of reading. Each teacher will handle homework according to what best meets the child's needs. Please pay careful attention to the classroom requirements so you can build this organizational time for homework into your child's evening or weekend time if necessary.



Testing and Assessment

Highland Mill Montessori participates in required local and state testing programs. Math and literacy assessments are administered throughout the school year (at this time, this includes: i-Ready assessments, DIBELS testing, and MVPAs). Children in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 must take the North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) test in math and reading. Fifth grade students will also take the science EOG test.

Infinite Campus

Parents of students in 6th grade can view their child's grades and academic progress at any time through the Parent Portal. Classroom assignments, test grades, projects, and overall course grades can be accessed here. You can obtain information about how to login to Infinite Campus as a parent from the front office (Ms. Loni or Ms. Abi).

Children's Behavior

Part of our Montessori philosophy and curriculum addresses community building and respect for others. This is referred to as "Grace and Courtesy". Elementary classes place community building as an essential element in our program. Respect for ourselves, respect for others, and respect for our environment are basic building blocks to having a safe and successful school.

Please review the *Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Character Development Handbook* online for consequences for inappropriate behavior. CMS and Highland Mill Montessori use this as a school-wide plan for extreme behaviors. Please sign and return Page 1- Student and Parent Acknowledgement and Pledge regarding CMS Code of Student Conduct (signature on the Learning Compact suffices as it includes the reading of/adherence to the Code of Conduct). HMM follows Positive Discipline practices and has many core behavior practices/resources utilized throughout the school and available to any student. Reflective conversations and mild and/or one-time behavior concerns will be handled in-house, but if something becomes a pattern or is extreme enough to warrant a referral, the administration will make a parent contact to discuss the situation and any possible disciplinary action.

Administrative

Admissions

Montessori students are selected through the lottery system of CMS School Choice in the late winter/early spring of the year. There is a fee for Pre-K students for full-day and half-day participation. A limited number of scholarships, for which families must qualify financially, are available. Pre-K students must be four years old by August 31st. If immunization requirements are not met, a child may not attend school.

Emergency Information

In case of an emergency, the blue emergency information sheet must be up-to-date with phone contact numbers and addresses. **Call immediately with any changes.**



Attendance Requirements

Attendance is Required

Research indicates there is a clear relationship between good attendance and academic achievement. Students are required to attend school every day, arrive on time, and stay until the 4:15 PM dismissal. Children who arrive late miss valuable directions from their teacher and tend to have difficulty focusing on their work at the beginning of the day. Each year all schools in North Carolina are rated according to the percentage of students who attend school regularly. Records will be maintained and efforts will be made to communicate with parents regarding absences, truancy, tardies, and late afternoon pick-up.

*How can you most help your child succeed academically?
Make sure your child arrives on time and attends school every day.*

There is a **Ten Day Rule** that the State Board of Education has enacted. It states that when a student accumulates ten consecutive days of unlawful absences, he/she is to be withdrawn from funded membership as of the first day following his/her last day in attendance.

Excused Absences

Absences from school are excused for illness, religious holidays, and death in the immediate family (if bereavement/travel exceeds 3 days, additional documentation will be needed to avoid revocation from the program and review from administration/Student Placement). When a child returns to school, parents are **required by law** to notify the school of the reason for the absence by e-mailing the school attendance secretary/registrar, Ms. Abigail (abigailj.bailey@cms.k12.nc.us). Copy your child's teacher on the e-mail. Additionally, you can access a link on the Highland Mill homepage to submit your student's absence (<https://schools2.cms.k12.nc.us/Pages/absence.aspx?sid=413>).

Please notify the school if your child will be absent three or more consecutive days. Parents/guardians are responsible for getting missed work from the teacher. If you would like to request an excused absence for an educational opportunity, please ask Ms. Abi AHEAD OF TIME (4 weeks prior) for the request form. 1-2 excused absences may be approved for educational opportunities as long as the request was submitted before the absence and was approved (work to be submitted must cover grade level state standards or Montessori lessons pertinent to the student).

Tardies

It is very important for your child to arrive at school on time – by 9:15 AM. Daily instruction begins at 9:15 AM. Students who arrive at school after 9:15 AM must be escorted to the office by an adult. Students will receive a tardy pass to class. The student is listed as being late in his/her official attendance record. If a student comes in late and writes “medical appointment” as the reason, they must present a note to the office secretary for absence to be excused. Unless documentation is provided, the absence will be coded as unexcused/tardy.

In the event of an emergency requiring your child to leave school early, please come to the office and tell the secretary/Ms. Abi that you need to sign your child out early. The secretary will guide you through the

signing out process. Office staff will call the teacher to send your child to the office for dismissal. For safety reasons, parents are not allowed to go directly to the classroom to get a child. The teacher will only release a child after the student has been called from the office. If returning on the same day, please take your child to the office to sign back into school upon returning.

Transportation Changes

The staff at Highland Mill Montessori takes the responsibility of keeping your children safe at all times very seriously. At dismissal time, it is very important that we know how you, the parent/guardian, want your child transported home. Therefore, teachers will follow the regular afternoon transportation plan that you have set in place for your child unless the office receives an e-mail from a parent/guardian (emails must be sent to highlandmill@cms.k12.nc.us). *Transportation plans cannot be altered based on information from your child.* Please notify the school office **no later than 3:00 PM** of a transportation change. This includes changes to participation in PEP clubs (ex. if a student can not stay for the duration of the club, the office needs notification prior to 3 pm as this would mean the student cannot participate and would need to have a different dismissal plan). The school will only release students to a parent or to the person(s) listed as approved to pick up your child in an emergency. Others will not be allowed to pick up your child from school. The school has the right to ask for picture identification before we release a child to any adult. Students may not ride the bus home with another student, but may be picked up in the car rider line by another parent if written documentation of the change was received from both parents prior to 3:00 pm.

Revocation of Magnet Assignment

In 2010, the School Board passed Policy JCA, Section VII: Guidelines for Revoking Assignments to Schools other than Home School. It reads, in part: "A student may be reassigned to his or her home school if the student: has an excessive number of absences, tardies, early dismissals, and/or is not transported from campus in a timely manner after the end of the school day or after-school activity."

Avoid Early Dismissal

The instructional day ends at 4:00 PM. The expectation is that students remain in class until 4:00 PM to maximize the instructional day. Please avoid picking up your children early. **Parents must contact the school office in writing (e-mail) before 3:00 PM for transportation changes.** After 3:00 PM, students are not called from class. Early dismissals are disruptive to the whole classroom and interfere with student learning. Please make every effort to schedule appointments before and after school hours or during school breaks. If early dismissals become excessive (5 or more without prior written documentation from the principal), the school-based procedure is for our attendance team to reach out to set up a meeting to make a plan with input from home and school. (Did you know that checking your child out just 10 minutes early each day results in your child missing 30 hours or 5 days of instruction?). If you have an extenuating circumstance, please schedule a meeting with Ms. Rachelle to discuss the circumstance and possible alternative plan for dismissal.

Optional Half-Day Pre-Kindergarten Dismissal

Students will be called from their classroom to the front office upon your arrival. Half-Day pick-up is between 1:00 pm- 1:30 pm and may not be later than 1:30 pm. If a parent picks up a kindergarten-6th grade sibling at this time, please note that this is counted as an early dismissal for the older student. You have the option to pick up your child just before his or her scheduled lunchtime, as well. Tuition is pro-rated for the half-day program.

Cell Phone (and all tech/BYOT) Policy

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) requires cell phones to **be powered off and stored out of sight in backpacks or handbags for the entirety of the school day**, with consequences escalating for violations, including potential suspension. The policy aims to minimize distractions, foster responsible digital citizenship, and ensure student focus during instructional time. Emergency situations are handled through school staff who can help students contact their parents.

Key Policy Details:

Off and Stored:

Cell phones/PTDs must be turned off and kept in a student's backpack or handbag.

Prohibited Use:

Students are not permitted to use cell phones/PTDs for any purpose, including listening to music, texting, playing games, or taking photos, at any time during the school day.

No Sight or Sound:

Phones/PTDs should not be seen or heard from the moment students arrive on campus until dismissal.

Consequences for Violations:

- First Incident: A warning and redirection.
- Second Incident: A reflective conversation
- Third Incident: Referral to administration for further disciplinary action.
- Refusal to Confiscate: Insubordination, which can lead to more severe consequences.

Emergency Contact:

- In an emergency where a student needs to contact a parent, they should inform a school staff member.
- A school staff member can then have the student escorted to the office to make the necessary phone call.

PTDs/BYOT includes but is not limited to:

- Ipads/Ipods and any other tablets
- Cell Phones
- Laptops
- Smart watches and any electronic watches (Gizmos, Apple watches, etc)
- Fitbits and other step tracking devices (Biggerfive, etc)

Communication



Home-School Communication

Your child's teacher will keep in contact with you as needed by phone/text, email, newsletters, and other appropriate means of communication including Parent Square and other platforms. Each teacher will provide an overview early in the first quarter of how assessments will be shared with you. Please notify the teacher when you have concerns. See additional information in the "Communicating with Teachers" section on page 4. **If you have a classroom concern, please contact the teacher first to make them aware and schedule a meeting to work on a solution. In the event that the concern is not remedied, the next flow of communication should be directed to the Dean or AP, and only finally, if all other courses of action have not resulted in a satisfactory resolution for the parent, reach out to the principal. Our school-wide practice is to meet with both the classroom teacher and administration present when discussing classroom-based concerns.** You can also expect to receive an HMM Newsletter over the weekend (please let the office know if you are not receiving these, they sometimes go to clutter), a Connect Ed phone message on Fridays, and can see additional school information on the school website and social media pages as well as through regular Parent Square whole-school messaging.

Your child might not have homework each day, as much work is done with Montessori materials throughout the day. When you ask about your child's day, ask about something specific. Instead of, "How was your day?" ask, "Who did you play with today and what did you do?" or "What did you learn in math today?" or "Did you write a story or did you do research today? Tell me more."

Any class request details for the following school year needs to be submitted in writing to the principal via email during the second semester and prior to May. Any information shared about desires for class placements should include characteristics of the environment and/or educator you think would be beneficial for your student and not messaging with names and direct teacher requests. These can not be honored for a variety of reasons.

Food



Breakfast, Lunch, and Snacks

Please be mindful that our Montessori curriculum emphasizes sound nutrition. Students are not allowed to bring sodas to school, and sweets should be limited. To maximize time available for eating and fostering your child's independence, please select food packaging and containers that students can open. This is a wonderful, Montessori "practical life" work to practice at home. Each classroom teacher will communicate how snack will work in their classroom (students are always allowed to bring their own personal snack....even if class snack is served).

- Breakfast will be served up until 9:30 am for any students who arrive late.

Please read nutrition alerts on sending food to share with others. Many students have allergies to foods that result in serious medical problems (especially peanut products). Commercially prepared food is NOT permitted in the cafeteria at any time. Doing so violates Child Nutrition Guidelines. **If you eat lunch with your child, please bring a bag lunch or purchase a school lunch.**

Debit Policy

- CMS has established a debit policy to allow elementary students without meal money the opportunity to purchase meals until the parent can be notified of the need for funds. This policy is intended to supply a breakfast or lunch meal only and cannot be used for a-la-carte purchases.
- The cafeteria manager will print a list of students with a negative balance weekly. The cafeteria manager will call parent/guardian of students on the list. If the parent is unresponsive, the school counselor will make a home visit to assist the parent in completing a meal application or help parents determine how their child will get meals until money is sent.
- Students with a negative balance will not be allowed to purchase a-la-carte items. Any cash that the student presents for payment will be applied to the debit. A-la-carte items may be removed from the student's tray at the cash register.
- Reminders will be put in newsletters going home to parents of the **PAYPAMS** (www.paypams.com) web site where they can check account balances and deposit money by debit or credit card.
- Account balances follow the student until they graduate or leave the system.
- The cafeteria manager will complete Financial Obligation Forms for students with a negative balance at the end of each year. Forms will be distributed to teachers by May 15th. Report cards will be held until payment is received.

Applying for Free/Reduced Meals

Free breakfast is offered to all students, however lunch is no longer free. You may complete an application for meal benefits. This Free/Reduced Lunch application is available on-line or from the school.

Only one application needs to be completed per household. You may apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

- For additional instructions on completing a "Family Meal Application," call Child Nutrition Services (980-343-6325) between 7:30 AM and 4:30 PM or e-mail lunch@cms.k12.nc.us.

Snacks

Each teacher will let you know how the class will handle snacks during the day.

Health and Safety

Campus Safety

Our school makes every effort to provide a safe place for your child. The school is equipped with a video, intercom entry system, and electronic doors. Electronic keys are only assigned to staff members. Our building also has 25 cameras located throughout the school for additional security measures. Hall passes are required when a student leaves the classroom. Students remain within the boundaries set by their teachers when outside at the playground and the campus at large. Staff monitors to ensure there are no outside interactions with adults/pedestrians (unless you are a signed in volunteer/visitor with a pass).



Visitors sign-in via lobby guard in the office when they arrive and leave the building or on any part of the campus. We encourage our staff members to guide anyone without a visitor's badge to the sign-in area in the office. As part of the Safe Schools initiative that has been adopted by the district and school, it is important that you follow these procedures EVERY time you enter the building and that you avoid walking in with other families/staff members. There is a visitor entrance to the right of the staff entrance and we ask that all students/families/community members/visitors use those doors only. Each visitor must be buzzed in. We greatly appreciate your support with this effort to maintain safety at all times here at HMM.

Emergency Drills

The staff and students of Highland Mill Montessori practice emergency drills on a regular basis. First, we conduct a practice fire drill each month. Second, we also practice emergency procedures in case of a tornado. Finally, staff members and students practice "lockdown" procedures in case an unfriendly visitor comes on the school grounds. Your children may talk about these emergency drill experiences at home. Please help them understand how these practices and procedures help keep all of us safe at school.

In the event that you are in the building during a drill or actual lockdown, please follow the directions given by the teacher or staff member you are with. If you are in a hallway, please go quickly into the first open classroom so that doors can be secured. It is imperative that you refrain from using your cell phone or communicating with people outside of the school during a lockdown so that our safety plan can be implemented without disruption to the process.

Emergency Notification

If the entire school day is cancelled or opening is delayed, notification will be made available through local radio and television stations by 5 AM or scheduled airtime. If school is canceled, all other planned student activities for that day will also be canceled. If school has to close early after students have arrived, local radio stations will make an announcement regarding early dismissal. A *Connect-ED*® message is sent to all parents using contact emergency information on file. It is important that parents complete the *Emergency Early Dismissal Form* which requires parents to provide information on your child's transportation in case school is closed during the school day. Working parents should make emergency arrangements for childcare on days when school is forced to close early. If an emergency event that forces school to close early, children will be dismissed from school according to what is listed on the *Emergency Early Dismissal Form*. Please remember that during such an emergency, the school may not be able to contact parents or to receive incoming calls from parents.

Medications

CMS Board Policy states that no medication, prescription, or over the counter medication, can be dispensed by the school without written permission from the physician. Medication authorization forms are available in the main office or at:

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/csh/Pages/Forms%20and%20Documents.aspx>

- A separate form must be filled out for each medication. The form(s) must be filled out before any medication can be given.
- Children may never keep medication in a backpack.
- Students may never take any form of medication, prescription or non-prescription, even a cough drop, on their own.
- All medicines must be kept in the main office.

Children who are sick, contagious, or who have a fever should not come to school. Please give the school up-to-date contact numbers in case of an accident or illness. In the event of an accident/injury, parents will be called. We have staff members trained in emergency procedures in case of injury. If your child has allergies or other health-related illnesses that may require special attention, please give that information to the teacher and main office.

Money at School

Other than meal money, your child should not bring money to school. Necessary special project or field trip money collection will be announced ahead of time and collected through Online School Payments (OSP-see link on HMM homepage). In extenuating circumstances where cash may be the only option, please contact the school/Ms. Loni.

Learning Compact

At Highland Mill Montessori, we believe students do their best through teamwork of parents, families, students, and school staff. Annually, every parent/guardian will read, sign, and promise to support our HMM Learning Compact. Through this compact, students, parents, teachers, and principal promise to work together to make sure every student is academically successful. Please sign the Learning Compact that was sent home and return to your child's teacher during the first week of school.



Parent Involvement and Volunteers

We believe that parents are the child's first and most important educators. Highland Mill Montessori emphasizes the importance of the family in the child's development and we seek to create a partnership with parents. We believe the school becomes "healthier" and more complete with its collaboration with parents, as we both work to support our children.

We encourage parent participation in our school's everyday affairs, as well as special events. There are so many ways to volunteer and help support our children and the school. Various options may include: listening to readers, helping with school-wide events, chaperoning field trips, acting as a class helper, tutoring opportunities, helping in the media center, gardening, and serving on special committees (see website for JEDI Committee options). Please reach out to your child's teacher or the PTA to learn how to get involved! If you would like to volunteer, there is an online volunteer profile form on the CMS Home Page. For the safety of our students, CMS policy requires all volunteers to complete this form.

Parent volunteering enrich the learning experience for your child, improve their social skills, and set your child up for future success. HMM has a variety of open and closed school-wide events. Parents are welcome to volunteer in most events (open school events). However, some events are closed to only staff and students to develop the bonding and build collaboration and interaction within our staff and children. Daily, you are welcome to volunteer during whole-child time at 3 pm.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

The PTA will distribute information to you regarding meetings and special events. The goal is to have every parent help in various ways throughout the school. Please sign in at the front desk and register your time when you visit with us. Need to contact the PTA, email the PTA at highlandmillmontessoripta@gmail.com

School Improvement Team (SIT)

The SIT is composed of individuals who are interested in advising the principal and helping with the planning and focus of the school program. The team meets throughout the year to discuss school issues. We encourage parental participation because your perspective is valuable. Monthly meetings are held at 8:00 am on the third Thursday of every month.

School Calendar

School calendar(s) can be found on the CMS website. Please use it as a resource to plan for childcare on holidays and teacher workdays. Please note that **10/1, 11/19, 2/12, 4/29** are early release days for students. School will dismiss 3 hours early.

2025-2026 Calendar

Key Dates

Aug. 18 - 22	Teacher Workdays
Aug. 25	First Day of School
Sep. 1	Labor Day
Sep. 9 & 23	Teacher Workday
Oct. 2	Teacher Workday
Oct. 31	Q1 (46 days) Ends
Nov. 4	Teacher Workday
Nov. 11	Veterans Day
Nov. 26	Teacher Workday
Nov. 27 - 28	Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 22-Jan. 2	Winter Break
Jan. 19	MLK, Jr. Day
Jan. 21	Q2 (42 days) Ends
Jan. 23	Teacher Workday
Feb. 16	Teacher Workday
Mar. 3 & 20	Teacher Workday
Apr. 2	Q3 (47 days) Ends
Apr. 3	Teacher Workday
Apr. 6-10	Spring Break
May 25	Memorial Day
Jun. 10	Q4 (42 days) Ends
Jun. 11 - 12	Teacher Workday

- ▲ 17 Workdays
- 10 Annual Leave Days
- 11 Holidays
- ◆ 04 Early Release Days
- 04 Last Day of Quarter

Total Instructional Hours:
Minimum of 1063

Makeup Days:
1. Jan. 23 3. March 20 5. June 11
2. Feb. 16 4. April 3

This calendar reflects the 2025-2026 academic calendar approved by the Board of Education on April 30, 2024. School makeup days will be used in the order listed. The superintendent may waive up to four makeup days. S.S.L. 2023-2024 671 authorized the use of Remote Instruction for emergency closures such as inclement weather.

JULY 2025							AUGUST 2025							SEPTEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4*									1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
*July 4 th Holiday for 12-month employees only							August 25 th First Day of School													

OCTOBER 2025							NOVEMBER 2025							DECEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
															1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			

JANUARY 2026							FEBRUARY 2026							MARCH 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31								29	30	31				

APRIL 2026							MAY 2026							JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
															1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				

Transportation



Car Pool

Drivers must wait in their cars in the carpool line to pick up and drop off children. If you have designated a driver for, please inform this person of this procedure. You will receive two (2) dashboard tags from your child's teacher that will display your child's name. To expedite this process, please display these cards daily. We do not allow an undesignated person to take your child, so always indicate alternative drivers on the emergency form.

- Please note that no child is to be dropped off at school prior to 8:45 a.m. The building is locked until 8:45 when it is time for entry. It is unsafe and unlawful for children to be left outside unattended.
- Car Riders can only be dropped off at the front door after their car has progressed through the car rider line. Students must remain in the car until that time. Dropping children off on Clemson Avenue or in the school parking lot is a violation of school policy.
- All car riders must be picked up by 4:30 in the afternoon.** This is a safety issue as students do not have supervision after 4:30.

Bus Riders

- For all Pre-K students, an adult is required at the bus stop to put the child on the bus in the morning and be at the stop to receive the child in the afternoon. Pre-K students will not be allowed to get off the bus if a designated adult is not present and will be returned to the school for parent pick-up. Having an adult at all stops for any age student is strongly recommended but is required for Pre-K.
- Bus stop times are approximate. To allow for traffic conditions, be at the stop ready to meet the bus 10-15 minutes before the designated time. At the beginning of the year, times will change as new students are added to a route or parents decide not to use a stop. Please be flexible.
- All bus stop changes require an application to be submitted on-line at <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/transportation/Pages/default.aspx>. No changes will be effective until the school receives notification of approval from the Transportation Department. Please note that every change means the bus route must be re-written and could affect the stop times for other children.

- Buses will load and unload from the bus lot at the back of the school.
- If your child rides the bus to/from a daycare, the provider must agree to follow transportation procedures including physically standing at the stop.

Bus Information

If you need to make changes in transportation, expect a waiting period of approximately 5-10 school days before the new route can be established. Transportation information as well as new stop and alternate bus stop request forms is available at

<https://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/transportation/Pages/default.aspx>

Guidelines for Riding the School Bus

Highland Mill Montessori follows the school system's Bus Guidelines for behavior in your *Student Rights, Responsibilities and Character Development Handbook*. Please discuss these rules with your child. In the event that students have not followed the expectations, bus referrals and suspensions can be issued.

Information for Walkers

Students who are classified as a "walker" should live in the immediate vicinity of the school. All other children must be a bus rider or a car rider. Walkers must complete a [Walker/Self Dismissal Form](#). Walking without a completed walker form will be allowed up to 3 times. If you do not live in the vicinity of HMM, please do not park on Charles St to avoid the car rider line and walk up to the walker line. This school policy is in place to guarantee a safe, efficient, and orderly arrival/dismissal as well as showing grace and courtesy to our neighbors.

*If there are any changes in your child's daily transportation plan the office must be notified by 3:00 PM in writing (fax, e-mail). Changes in bus transportation require prior approval of an administrator. **Remember, no early dismissals will be allowed after 3:00 PM.***

Uniforms/HMM Dress Code

We appreciate your support with the dress code and ensuring that students are properly dressed for school. Our dress code is linked [here](#). We do not enforce a uniform policy any longer.

- *Shorts and skirts should be at the line of fingertips when arms are to the side (at or below mid-thigh).*
- *Clothing should not expose undergarments, chest, or midriff. Button shirts must be buttoned.*
- *Three-finger rule for tops: Straps should span at least three fingers in width.*
- *Pants should fit on the waist. No pajamas.*
- *Clothing may not contain inappropriate messages/logos (drugs/alcohol, offensive or insensitive statements/messages/graphics)*
- *Shoes should be closed-toed, no wheelies, shoes with lights, or crocs. No slippers (unless student is in specified classes where indoor/outdoor shoes are allowed with protocol)*
- *Hats and hoods are not to be worn in the building, unless for an HMM Hat Day.*
- *Incidents of dress code deviations will be addressed with grace/respect and will require the student to abide by the dress code criteria going forward. If a clothing change is necessary, parents will have the option of bringing something to the school or we will provide clothing for the student to change into.*

Things to Consider

- *Young children may need a change of clothing throughout the school day due to spills and accidents. Please place a change of clothing in your child's backpack in the event that*

they need clean clothing articles during the school day. Our emergency clothing closet may not have the child's correct size. Having the extra clothing in their backpacks will allow the child to quickly change their clothes and return to their classrooms for instruction.

- *Remind children to bring coats during the winter months. Teachers take the children outside for recess on cold days, so coats are essential protective clothing for recess in cold weather*
- *Please write your child's name on all of their personal items (backpacks, lunchboxes, sweatshirts/jackets, winter coats, gloves, and hats).*
- *We have a "Lost and Found" at the school. If your child is missing something, ask them to visit the Lost and Found or write to their teacher about the missing item so we can check when there is time.*

Visitor's Policy

For security and the safety of our students, all visitors must sign in at the main office and wear a sticker or badge indicating they have registered. Please be aware that our staff is told to kindly question anyone seen without an identification badge or sticker provided upon signing in. There is a visitor entrance door on the right and we ask that visitors buzz in at the front entrance and stand with their face in front of the camera so that office staff can see you and buzz you in. Upon entering, it is imperative that you sign in on LobbyGuard and follow directions of the office staff for visiting classrooms. When on campus for any reason, adhere to all protocols and follow directions given by staff members. Failure to do so may result in administrative action up to including a ban from campus. Help us keep all students and staff safe.

- There is no visitation during the arrival time from 8:45-9:15 am and at dismissal from 3:30-4:30 pm (early release ends at 3:00 but parents/volunteers helping with Whole-Child-time or visiting for a birthday circle may sign in prior to 3:00 and stay through the completion of the activity).

