

IPS

International Playschool of Skopje

Parent Handbook



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Introduction

Welcome to International Playschool of Skopje! We are delighted that you have chosen to enroll your child in our preschool program.

The International Playschool of Skopje (IPS) is a private licensed preschool approved by the Macedonian law for preschool education.

The International Playschool of Skopje (IPS) is committed to provide an enriching, stimulating, and supportive learning environment for young children. Our teaching philosophy is grounded in a profound respect for children and their immense potential to learn and grow. Taking advantage of children's natural curiosity, IPS provides many opportunities for them to discover the world around them and their special place within it. IPS helps children develop their skills and abilities in a variety of areas, enabling them to flourish as unique individuals and integrated members of society.

IPS promotes an environment where children become independent, confident, lifelong learners with a strong sense of self. We proudly offer a positive, child-centered preschool experience that fosters a love of learning in a nurturing community. In each child, we strive to cultivate:

- Autonomy
- A sense of belonging
- Respect for others
- Enthusiasm for exploration

IPS attributes much of its program's success to the close relations it fosters with and among member families. We are a close-knit community, and seek input from families to ensure that the program continues to respond to the needs of each child and group as a whole. Working together, teachers and families help IPS continue to provide an excellent learning environment for young children.

The policies in this handbook support and protect the values that have strengthened IPS for more than 20 years.

Again, welcome to our program. We look forward to learning and growing with your child in the coming year!

Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide families enrolled in the program with an overview of the International Playschool of Skopje, including our history, curriculum, administrative policies and procedures and other general information. The handbook is updated periodically and distributed to all IPS families.

Background Information

The International Playschool of Skopje is a private, English-language preschool open to children of all nationalities between all ages of 8 months and six years. IPS was first established in 1998 by Roberta Drummond, a Brazilian national temporarily residing in Skopje, in collaboration with Marija Mihailovic and Tanja Todorovski, two Macedonian university students, as a means of providing Ms. Drummond's children with a good nursery school education. Initially, the playgroup met at the Drummond house and included only the two Drummond children. The group grew quickly; however, as word spread among the Drummond's circle of friends and beyond and the program evolved to meet the changing needs of its students.

School Calendar

The IPS school year runs from September through August. Classes are held Monday through Friday with school hours from 7:45 am to 1:00 pm or 4:30 pm.

For the parents who will need to bring their children earlier than the above mentioned time, and pick them up later than 4:30 pm, IPS will organize extended hours for stay.

IPS observes the official Macedonian holidays and closed on these dates. IPS provides a year holiday calendar which is changeable.

IPS is closed for two weeks for the winter break.

Safety Codes and Instructions

IPS security system provides security code door locks which are changed periodically in order to keep the code protected. Regarding this matter all the parents are kindly requested to keep this information private because the safety codes are intended **ONLY FOR THE PARENTS** whose children are enrolled in IPS. This information is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and any kind of sharing is not permitted.

Our Curriculum

The IPS curriculum reflects the philosophy of the program - to meet the learning needs of each child as an individual as well as that of the group as a whole. Utilizing wide variety of activities suitable for children from 8 months to 6 years of age, IPS teachers help each child fulfill his or her own potential. Within the structure of the daily classroom routine (see page 8), children are able to direct their own course of play and learning experiences. At present, there are four classes for students, grouped according to age and development maturity: (1) 8 months and up; (2) 2 to 3 years old; (3) 3 to 4 years old; (4) 4 to 5 years old; and 5 years and up.

At present, enrolment in the IPS program is limited to 14 students in each group and two teachers per group who are responsible for the children.

IPS also holds a bilingual (English-Macedonian) program for Macedonian kids who is based on Macedonian national program. This program include 3 classes with maximum 16-17 kids with two leading teachers: Toddler class (age 2-3), First Class (age 3-4), Second Class (age 4-6).

1) Program for baby group – 8 months and up

There are many physical, emotional, and social skills that can be gained from baby group activities. The baby group introduces a whole new world of adventure for babies from 8 months and up. Trained caregivers provide a secure and nurturing atmosphere as they care for babies in our program. The activities in this group are based on playing and exploring in a safe area with good range of toys, including larger equipment. Songs and finger plays are wonderful activities for baby groups. We use silly songs, nursery rhymes, and finger plays. In addition to being fun and gaining smiles, babies gain fine motor skills from hand motions, vocal skills through singing, and positive brain stimulation through music. Even young babies that cannot physically participate gain positive effects by seeing and hearing the interactions. Baby group is a great way for babies to learn social skills. During group activities and games where caregivers are interacting, babies can watch one another introduce socialization. Every day walks in the park, or by the river side, can help the babies learn and explore nature and outside world.

2) Program for 2-3 year old group

In the youngest group, children learn a variety of important cognitive, social and motor skills that are continually reinforced throughout the school day. Through much play, both structured and unstructured, these young children are given ample opportunity to explore the world around them and learn to get along with others. During free play time, the teachers actively encourage the children to play with the wide variety of toys, puzzles and games in the room either on their own or in pairs or small groups, all the while the teaching such basic concepts as sharing and turn- taking. At project time, children

experiment with paper, paint, glue, and other materials to create their own works of art. At the same time they begin to learn about such concepts as shapes, colors, animals and people, among other things. During story time, children learn about the joy of reading while developing good listening skills. At music time, children learn to sing songs and express themselves through dance. In general, all activities are tailored to the particular needs of every young child.

3) Program for 3-4 year old group

Children in the middle group participate in many of the same activities as those in the youngest group but at a more challenge level to further stimulate the development of their cognitive, social and motor skills. The curriculum is organized around themes which are integrated into all program arias - early literacy and language arts, music and arts and crafts. For example, when learning about animals, the children may listen to stories about see creatures, act out a role of various jungle creatures, memorize rhymes about dogs, sing about tigers, and make masks about farm animals. At this level the children are introduced to the letters of the alphabet and the numbers from 1 to12, learning not only to recognize them but also to write them. They also strengthen their social skills through games as they learn how to win and lose with grace and during snack time when they learn basic rules of etiquette. Like the younger children, the children in the middle group have ample opportunity for free play in both the indoor and outdoor play area. The second semester will introduce the Beka Book curriculum.

4) Program for 4-5 year old group

The curriculum for the older children is based on the Advanced Beka Book Series, a home schooling literacy program from the United States. Under the guidance of our most experienced teacher, children work through a sequentially organized program in phonics, reading and writing, in which thy learn the names, sounds and pictures all the letters and letter blends in the English alphabet, the basics of reading, and how to write lower and upper-case letters to form simple words. For children over the age of five, IPS offers another program focusing on the continued development of literacy, mathematics, and foreign language skills. In addition, like the younger groups, children in the older group have many opportunities to express themselves creatively in dramatic play, music class and a variety of art projects.

5) Program for 5 year old group and up

Enrolling your children in our kindergarten program will give them the best start in life and help prepare them for school. Your 5 year old will take part in play-based learning, developing early literacy and numeric concepts and communication skills which will help their reading and writing ability. Our

kindergarten program provides opportunities for learning, self-expression and self discovery in a variety of areas in music, drama, games, science and language activities assisted by the teachers.

IPS has chosen to implement the play-based learning framework for Preschool. It is a comprehensive system of learning based on research and knowledge regarding all areas of child development – social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language.

The teachers use their own experiences, as well as the children's interests, to adapt the curriculum to be unique to each IPS class. Classroom observations and assessments become important tools for the teachers to communicate with parents.

Play allows children to learn about the world and themselves. As children play, they learn new skills, develop coping mechanisms, test new ideas, and master their bodies. Children make choices about where to play in the classroom; they are learning a variety of skills. For example, building with blocks promotes material exploration, as well as spatial planning, symbolic representation, dramatic play, and social interactions. In the area of art, teachers emphasize the process rather than the finished product. As children use art materials, they are planning and carrying out a task and also using symbols to represent their ideas.

Our play-based curriculum offers children many opportunities for positive interactions with other children and adults. We treat each child with respect and reinforce his/her value as an individual and as a unique member of the IPS community.

Daily Classroom Routine

A typical day at IPS generally adheres to the following routine (flexible):

7:45 - 9:30 Arrival time, Free play and breakfast

9:30 - 9:35 Clean up time

9:35 - 10:00 Group discussion, Music activity

10:00 - 10:30 Arts and crafts or literacy activity

10:30 - 11:00 Toileting and hand washing,
Clean-up

11:00 - 11:45 Gross motor activities

11:45 - 12:00 Arts and crafts activity

12:00 - 12:15 Story time

12:15 - 12:30 Good Bye Song, Sticker time

12:30 - 13:00 Free play until departure
(generally outside, weather permitting)

13:00 - 13:30 Lunch time

13:30 - 16:30 Puzzle time, game time, social time,
coloring time, free play until departure



Nondiscriminatory Policy

IPS is a nonsectarian preschool. IPS admits students of any race, color, religion, and national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities and does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Staff Qualifications

Every year, the director, teachers, and assistant teachers must complete a required number of continued training hours. All of the staff have experience working with young children in a supervised program. In addition, our staff members truly love and understand child development and our play-based philosophy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. IPS takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. IPS recommends that conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the IPS community. Discussions in the hallways should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that this parent first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to a successful preschool program.

School - Wide (Nonemergency) Information:

The IPS office communicates with parents in a number of ways:

- E-mail
- Telephone or IPS website
- Notices sent home in children's backpacks

IPS strongly believes that an open, continuous flow of information between the home and school is in the best interest of every child and the programs a whole. IPS has

established several means of promoting regular communication among and between parents/guardians and teachers. Suggestions on ways to further facilitate communication between home and school is always welcome.

Daily: Parents/Guardians and teachers have the opportunity to discuss briefly any issue related to the children or the program during drop-off and pick-up times. Should a lengthy, detailed discussion be necessary, however, an appointment should be made outside class time.

Weekly: Folder Every Friday, teachers send home folders with each child containing his/her artwork from the week. Please return the empty folder to the classroom the following Monday so your child can fill it up again with his/her new masterpieces.

Homework Folder: Twice a week the Older Groups will have a Homework Folder sent home with his/her homework in it. Please return the homework and folder when your child has completed his/her work.

Monthly Calendar: During the first week of each month, IPS teachers distribute calendars denoting each day's planned theme and activities for that month.

IPS Parent-Teacher Meeting: The IPS Meeting is a periodic event at which parent/guardians and teachers discuss any and all issues relevant to the school as a whole. The meeting is open to IPS staff and the parents/ guardians of children currently enrolled in the program.

Each meeting participant has the right to propose topics for discussion for the agenda, debate any issue on the agenda, and cast a vote when group decisions are required. In these cases, a majority vote wins.

Teachers are responsible for scheduling the IPS Meeting date and time, preparing the agenda, and facilitating the meeting discussions. Any parent or guardian wishing to submit a topic for the agenda should do so with as much anticipation as possible or at least two days before the meeting date.

Family workshop: Every months IPS organizes a family workshop. All the parents are welcomed to join it and spend some time with the other parents.

Family Contact Information List: To encourage communication among families, IPS provides parents/guardians with contact information for all those children enrolled in the Program.

Please be sure to check the contents of your child's backpack each night so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.

Sharing Day

Every Wednesday kids are encouraged to bring something (toys, books) from home for sharing with the classmates.

Child - Specific Information:

During arrival and dismissal times, staff members must devote full attention to all of the children. Please keep conversations brief. If you need to communicate specific information, a written note or email is preferred.

Parent-teacher conferences are held three times per school year (fall, winter, and spring). For the winter and spring conferences, the teacher will prepare an evaluation for the purpose of sharing observations and documenting the development of each child. At the conference, teachers and parents will discuss the evaluation and your child's developmental progress.

If, at any time, you have special concerns, please feel free to contact your child's teacher

- use e-mail, send a note, or call the office to leave a message. During school hours, teachers cannot accept phone calls. If you have a message for a teacher during school hours, please call or email the office, and we will relay the message. The teacher will respond as soon as possible.

Please do not discuss problems or concerns in the presence of your child or other parents.

Please communicate with the teacher about any changes at home or within the family (i.e. parent on a trip, family member in the hospital, sick grandparent). These changes can affect your child's behavior, and it is useful for staff to be aware of these developments. IPS will always respect your privacy.

If your child is going to be out of school for any reason, please let the office know. For illnesses, this is especially important so that we can inform families of any communicable disease symptoms while maintaining confidentiality. In addition, teachers and children miss a child when they are absent, so they would like to know that the child is okay.

Admissions Policy

IPS admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin. If parents have any major educational, social, or developmental concerns about their child entering IPS, parents need to discuss these concerns with the director before the child's first day of class. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment be established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, IPS reserves the right to place children in classes by age, and developmental level. IPS does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Application for admission into the International Playgroup of Skopje is open to all children ages 8 months to 6 years. Admission into the IPS program is determined by the classroom teachers in accordance with the following basic criteria:

- The child is between ages 8 months and 6 years by September 1 of the school year.
- The child exhibits a sufficient level of maturity to function in a group setting.
- There is available space in the class.

In the event that no spaces are available in a class, candidates for enrolment can add their names to the Waiting List.

In general, admission into the program is prioritized in the following way:

1. Children already in the playgroup who are re-enrolling for the next academic year or who are moving up from the younger group to the older is given first priority.
2. Children with siblings enrolled in the playgroup are given second priority.
3. Once students falling under the first two priority categories are enrolled, as a general rule, IPS follows a first-come-first-serve basis for admitting children on the Waiting List into the program. Certain situations may arise, however, in which exceptions are made to this rule. For example, children on the Waiting List who are closest in age to the group's average age might take priority over other children on the Waiting List, regardless of the order in which they were placed on the Waiting List. In the event that program will be determined by the teachers based on an evaluation of their ability to fit the existing group.

Once a child is enrolled in the program, her/his place is guaranteed for the upcoming academic year program provided the family continues to make tuition payments each trimester. See the section on Tuition Fees in this handbook for more information on IPS tuition policy.

Financial administration

All inquires regarding IPS financial matters should be directed to Marija Mihalovic Atanasovska and Tanja Todorovski who also serve as the school Administrative Manager.

1) Tuition Fees

Term	Months Covered	Payment Due Date	Tuition Amount per Child per Term
1	September - January	September 10th	80.000 MKD (till 13:00 h) 90.000 MKD (till 16:30 h)
2	February - June	February 10th	80.000 MKD (till 13:00 h) 90.000 MKD (till 16:30 h)

* The tuition fees can be paid in two installments, one for each semester.

* July and August are summer camp and IPS is open for everyone.

2) Tuition Refund Policy

In the event that a student withdraws from IPS, the refund policy is as follows:

Withdrawal within the first month of initial Enrolment	Full refund minus pro-rated amount for first month
After first 2 weeks of enrolment, withdrawal within the first half of a term	50% refund of amount paid for term
Withdrawal within the second half of a term	No refund

All requests for refunds must be made in writhing to the lead teachers of IPS. Should refunds be required, refunds will not occur until at least three weeks after the final payment was posted

In the event that child is not able to attend school due to sickness/ family vacation etc. The full tuition fee is still applicable. IPS does not provide refunds or partial discounts for any temporary (short or long) absence of attendance during the school semesters.

In addition to the tuition fees, families are responsible for a non-refundable registration fee of 2.500 MKD per child at the time of enrolment.

For additional activities organized by IPS, the parents assumes the obligation to pay up-front fee in amount of 650,00 (six hundred and fifty) denars per child on annual basis.

3) Part time student

There are limited options for Part Time Attendance and will be limited to 2 students in the small and baby class only. In an attempt to keep class size to a manageable level for teachers, students must stay on their pre- arranged schedules. For example, if your child is to come on Wednesday and Fridays, then that schedule must be adhered to. Switching of days can occasionally be agreed upon but must be coordinated through the teachers 24- 48 hours in advance in order to have the appropriate materials for that days activities.

Part time is defined as coming no more than 3 days per week, every week for a total of 10 days per month.

For the other classes, there is not part time option as it has been found to be too disruptive to the other students and to the curriculum. However, for students new to IPS, parents may choose an option part time schedule in the first months only.

4) Late Fee

Tuition has to be paid by the 15th of the term month. Payments received after 15th will be assessed a 5% late fee. If you need to make special arrangements please consult with administrative manager before this date.

We thank you for your attention to this matter.

5) School Bus

IPS offers School Bus service for both pick-up and drop off. The timing of the drop-off and pick up varies depending on the number of children and the route. Children will be picked up from home between 8:00 and 8:30 am. There are two options for the end of the day depending on whether your child stays until 1:00 or 3:00 pm. The monthly fee for the bus service is 3.500 MKD for drop-off and pick-up. One way service is 2.000 MKD monthly fee is flexible depend from the distance.

Required Forms for Enrollment

These forms must be on file before a child attends class.

- Health Inventory
- Emergency Form
- Emergency Preparedness Form
- IPS Parent Signature Page
- Enrollment Agreement
- Child Information Form
- Cultural Diversity Questionnaire
- Parent Interest Survey

Below is a brief description for each form:

Health Inventory: (includes immunizations) Please be sure to refer to instructions accompanying these forms.

Emergency Form: YOU MUST FILL OUT BOTH SIDES

Document allergies and medical problems on the back. In the event of an emergency, this information is critical.

When you list persons to contact in case of an emergency, please list persons who live within a reasonable distance of the school, who are known to your child, and who would be willing to pick up your child in any emergency. Please bear in mind that, if your child is ill and IPS cannot reach you, we may call those persons listed on your card. This list can be updated at anytime during the year with written authorization to the office.

Unless we have a note or an email from a parent, a child will only be released to person(s) listed on the Emergency Form. Please advise your child's teacher and the office, in a signed note or email, each time your child is to be picked up by someone not previously authorized. **We will not release your child without this prior written notice.**

It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the emergency information up to date.

Emergency Preparedness Form: IPS has formulated emergency procedures to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as our school closing or an evacuation. In the event of an emergency situation, IPS will contact you by text message and/or phone call from an IPS staff member. **Please keep your information up to date throughout the school year.**

Please make sure to let the office know if your emergency contact number does not receive text messages so that we can make other arrangements for reaching you in case of a school-wide emergency. A school-wide text message will be our preferred way of reaching out to parents during an emergency. If a school-wide text message is not possible, you will receive a phone call from an IPS staff member.

IPS Parent Signature Page: This form is needed in the event that emergency treatment is required, as well as for neighborhood walks and photo or publicity purposes.

Enrollment Agreement: The Enrollment Agreement outlines the details of the relationship between your family and IPS. It includes payment guidelines, withdrawal details, and other policies. If any parent/guardian consistently disregards the contract, IPS reserves the right to terminate the agreement and relationship with the family in question.

Child Information Form: Parents/Guardians should submit the child information form (**Printable form is available on the web site www.ips.mk**)

Cultural Diversity Questionnaire: This information gives your teacher and the school an idea of your family's cultural traditions and how they may be shared in the school community.

Parent Interest Survey: This is an opportunity for parents/guardians to be involved at IPS in the classroom and in the school community at large. There are lots of opportunities!

FOOD AT IPS

Parent can either prepare homemade snack or lunch or utilize the catering service. IPS offers the food service and the monthly fee is 1.770,00 mkd.

NO NUT POLICY

We ask that parents of all children not send any food or food product that lists peanuts and/or tree nuts on the ingredient label. IPS has adopted a **“No Peanuts or Tree Nuts at School”** policy. We ask that parents carefully monitor foods being packed in lunch boxes to ensure that no peanuts, peanut oils, or other nuts or nut oils are among the foods selected (allergy-wise, coconuts are considered a fruit and are okay). **Food labels/ingredients may change over time**, so it is always recommended that you read the label before purchasing snacks. **Please read labels carefully to make sure the products are nut free. This includes labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts,” “May contain traces of almond,” “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts,” and so forth.** Rule of thumb: if in doubt, make another choice.

In classrooms where children have potentially life-threatening sensitivities, IPS may consider additional safety measures and address the situation on a room-by-room basis. **Food and baked goods need to be store-bought only and not prepared at home.** Food sent to IPS for special occasions (birthdays, class parties, etc.) must be free of all nut ingredients and a list of those ingredients given to the teacher.

Parents of children with allergies are asked to provide a supply of safe treats to be used in lieu of store-bought and bakery-prepared items. Talk with your child and help him/her understand that food sharing is not allowed. This is a preventative safety measure to reduce food allergy exposures.

Hand washing and tabletop washing are additional risk-reduction measures that are used at IPS. Parents can help by ensuring adequate hand and face washing at home before arrival at school.

PEANUT- FREE/TREE NUT- FREE SNACK LIST

Thank you for your consideration and support in keeping the food-allergic children safe from having a life-threatening allergic reaction at school.

Please avoid snacks that contain the following: peanuts, peanut flour, peanut oil, or peanut butter or other nuts. This list includes snacks with almonds, filberts, Brazil

nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nut, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts. Coconuts are okay.

Food labels/ingredients may change over time, so it is always recommended that you read the label before purchasing snacks. Please read labels carefully to make sure the products are nut free. This includes labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts,” “may contain traces of almond,” “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts,” and so forth. When in doubt, make another choice.

Healthy snack ideas for homemade snack or lunch:

FRUITS/VEGETABLES

- Any fresh fruit (apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, pears, plums, clementines, strawberries, melons, berries, etc.)
- Applesauce cups (and assorted variety fruit flavored applesauce)
- Raisins, Craisins, and other dried fruits
- Fruit cups (peaches, pears, oranges, pineapple, fruit cocktail, fruit blends, etc.)
- Fresh vegetables (baby carrots, celery sticks, grape tomatoes, cucumber slices, broccoli, pepper strips, etc.)
- Vegetable dips

CHEESE/DAIRY

- Yogurt in individual cups or tubes
- String cheese or other cheeses (1 oz.)
- Drinkable yogurt or smoothies
- Cottage cheese

GRAINS/ SEEDS

- Sunflower butter is a great alternative and makes great Peanut Butter and Jelly!

Crackers:

- Triscuits, Wheat Thins, Vegetable Thins (all flavors)
- Stick crackers
- Toasteds crackers
- Goldfish crackers
- Animal crackers

Cereals:

- Cheerios (NOT Honey Nut or Frosted)
- Corn Flakes
- Crispix
- Cinnamon Raisin Crunch
- Life
- Wheaties
- Other unsweetened cereal without nuts

Other snack ideas:

- Small bagels with cream cheese
- Popcorn
- Pretzels (but some of them are not peanut/nut free)
- Nutrigrain cereal bars/yogurt bars
- Special Bars (NOT Nut)
- Special Snack Bites
- Rice cakes
- Potato Soy Crisps
- Muffins – mini or regular

LUNCH

Parents should send lunch and a drinking cup in a lunch box (for homemade lunch). Please label your child's lunch box clearly with your child's name on the outside of the lunch box. Lunches are stored in the school's refrigerator until lunchtime. IPS encourages parents to promote good eating habits by sending in nutritious items for lunch. Please pack a relatively small lunch, with no candy, and no more than one small dessert.

BIRTHDAYS AND CLASS PARTIES POLICY

Simple birthday snacks may be provided by parents to recognize children's birthdays. Please set a date with the teacher one week in advance. Less notice may result in a date other than your first choice. This time is necessary to assess the safety of all children who use your child's classroom, primarily with regard to life-threatening allergies. Be prepared to tell the teacher the snack that you would like to serve so that other parents can send a safe alternate treat, if needed. Snacks provided by families must be store bought and should be small portions (one cookie, mini-muffin, doughnut hole, etc.). Store-bought foods provided for birthdays must be preceded by a complete list of ingredients, submitted to the teacher at least two class days before the food is served.

Each class will have its own distinct way, determined by the teacher, to honor birthdays. We ask that parents not distribute favors, goody bags, or paper goods. Also, IPS will not be able to distribute birthday party invitations. This includes parents putting invitations in cubbies.

For information about bringing food for birthday and classroom parties, please make sure to review the “Food at IPS” section. In accordance with our **Class Party and Birthday policy**, only store-bought foods can be served, and the food provided must be preceded by a completed list of ingredients and food label notifications, submitted to the teacher **at least 2 class days** before the food is served. Food must adhere to our nut-free policy.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Advance planning is vital to the safety of our children and to smooth daily classroom procedures.

GETTING STARTED

First Day Orientation

The first day of school is often an exciting milestone in the life of a child (and parent), but for some it can also be an intimidating or overwhelming experience. The teachers at IPS make every effort possible to smooth this transition and provide children with a warm welcome into their new classroom. As they arrive, children will be greeted personally by their teacher and shown to their new hangers where they will keep all their personal belongings throughout the school day. Once all the children arrive, the teacher will invite everyone to sit in a circle time to sing the “Hello song” and get to know each other’s names. Later, the teachers will give the entire class a mini-tour of the school indicating the location of all the play areas. In addition, children will shown their personal bulletin board or shelf upon which they will keep all their artwork. The teachers will organize a variety of activities following the typical class routine so the children will begin to become accustomed to it, but no child will be pressured to join in any activity. All children will be allowed to settle into the class routine at their own pace.

Adaptation period

The transition from the home to classroom environment is a unique experience for each child and IPS recognize that some children have more difficulty with this adjustment than others. Our goal during the adaptation period is to help each child feel safe and happy in the classroom, and to learn to recognize adults other than their parents/guardian as a source of authority, support, and friendship. With this in mind, the IPS teachers will work with parents/guardians to design an adaptation plan that is most appropriate for each child.

In general, the IPS teachers have found the following guidelines helpful in promoting a smooth adjustment to a new classroom environment:

- In the weeks before a child is due to enter the playschool, parents/guardians should plan one or more 1-2 hour visit to the IPS classroom with their child.
- Some children may benefit from an abbreviated schedule during the first week of class (starting with perhaps 1-2 hours a day and gradually building up to a full day’s schedule over time).
- Parents/guardians are welcome to stay with their children at the school but not in the classroom in the order to facilitate the adaptation process.
- If, after two weeks, a child does not seem to be adjusting well to the new classroom environment, IPS recommends that the child take one-month break from attending school and than try again after that.

In addition, throughout the adaptation period, IPS suggest parents/guardians being to establish a consistent drop-off routine to help the children cope with separation as time goes on.

Toilet training

Children who are still using diapers/nappies are welcomed into the IPS classroom. When the time is right and parents/guardians agree, IPS teachers will be happy to help children along in the toilet training process. For the period during which the child is not toilet trained, however, parent/guardians should be sure to provide multiple sets of clothing at school (underpants, trousers, socks, etc.)

Daily Arrival and Departure

Arrival:

Once a child has passed through the adaptation period, IPS recommends parents/guardians keep the daily drop-off routine as brief as possible in order to help children begin to focus on the day's activities ahead. Some children may find it difficult to become independently engaged in classroom activities if parents/guardians unnecessarily prolong the drop-off time. Furthermore, it is not unusual for young children to cry as a parent/guardian leaves the classroom, but most children will stop shortly after period of time, the teachers will contact the parents/guardian to discuss next steps. IPS encourages parents/guardians to feel free to call the teachers at any time to see how their children are doing. The teachers will be ready to start class at 9:30 am.

Drop-off time at IPS is between 7:45 and 9:30 am and pick-up time is normally between 12:30 and 1:00 pm or 4:00/4:30 pm (for full day attendance). Families also have the option of having their child stay an extra hour each day for an additional fee (see Tuition Fees section).

Early arrival: If you need to arrive earlier than usual you have to arrange with your class teacher.

Late arrival: Please be considerate and try to arrive on time. Frequent late arrivals are disruptive to the class and your child's school day.

Dismissal & Pick-Up

It is important that all children be picked up on time. Our staff members have responsibilities both before and after class sessions, so it is important that parents be mindful of dismissal times in order for our school day to go smoothly. It is also

upsetting to your child when he or she is unexpectedly the last person in the class to be picked up.

Late pick-up: Please keep IPS's phone number, (00389) 2 3073 700, programmed in your cell phone in case you are running late so that the teacher can let your child know that you are on your way. If you are late picking up your child, you will be charged extra fee per minute. Payment will be due upon arrival to office.

Early pick-up: If there will be need to pick up your child early please contact your child teacher.

Authorized pick-up: Anytime someone other than the typical pick-up person picks up your child, please let your teacher know.

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or the "persons authorized to pick up child" (listed on your child's Emergency Form), you must provide written notification via note or email (email to info@ips.mk only please) to IPS in each instance. Give the person's full name and inform this person that IPS will require proof of identification before releasing your child.

In the event of an emergency, a parent may call the office to give verbal permission for his or her child to go home with someone else. You will be asked to verify information on the Emergency Form in order for us to be assured that IPS staff is speaking to the parent.

IPS wants to ensure each child's safe transition from IPS's care to an authorized adult at dismissal time. Staff members are encouraged to observe the state of the adult picking the child up from IPS. In the event that a staff member believes the adult picking up a child is authorized but is angry/disgruntled or if the staff member has reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking a child up is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or is physically impaired in any way and may endanger a child, the staff member may have cause to refuse to release the child. If so, the staff member will request that another adult be called to pick up the child or call the numbers listed on the child's Emergency Form.

Parking Lot:

IPS's entrance road into the school is one way.
IPS parents should **park closest to our building.**

Drive slowly through the parking lot. There are children and parents who may be walking through the church or school parking lots.

Drivers of large SUVs should be especially careful, since small children can be very hard to see and they can dart around quickly in a parking lot.

It is against the law to leave unsupervised children in your car in the parking lot at any time.

Positive discipline policy

IPS is committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment for all children. The school's behavior policy encourages children to develop social skills that reflect many of IPS's values, including self-control, respect for others, and a positive self-esteem.

Teachers model appropriate behavior and guide positive interactions among children and adults. Nurturing these social skills is a central component of IPS Curriculum, and it helps children grow as successful, lifelong learners.

IPS's commitment to an age-appropriate and play-based curriculum ensures that activities are child centered and promote positive social interactions. Teachers carefully craft the environment, communicate and enforce clear boundaries and expectations for behavior, and use nonverbal cues and/or redirect a child's behavior to foster success.

When a problem arises, the teacher relies on modeling appropriate behavior, teaching peacemaking skills, and presenting stories or scenarios that reinforce the desired behavior. Children learn to make suitable choices and develop techniques for regaining self-control when they feel frustrated. Instructive and individually appropriate consequences help to strengthen the child's self-control and self-esteem.

When a child experiences a particularly challenging time, the school encourages parents and teachers to work together and develop appropriate strategies. If a specific circumstance needs attention, the teacher will follow these procedures:

The teacher will observe and document a child's behavior.

The teacher will discuss the child's behavior with a parent and inform him or her of learning-based strategies the teacher will implement. The teacher will discuss options with the director.

The teacher will follow up with the parent about how these strategies are influencing the behavior.

If concern persists, a conference will be held with teacher, parent, and director to discuss options to help the child further develop appropriate social skills.

Staff members will make reasonable effort to work with the child and his/her family to resolve behavioral concerns. At any time, an individual plan of action may need to be

implemented, depending on the severity of the concern. If needed, there is opportunity for teachers and the director to seek support from outside resources. The plan may include removal of a child from the classroom and/or calling the parent to take the child home. Repeated severe problems may result in IPS excluding a child from attending IPS.

Behavior Policy Specific to Biting:

Biting can happen in a preschool situation, especially with young children who do not have the verbal skills to express their feelings. Children's feelings can be related to many environmental factors, as well as internal emotions, such as frustration, tiredness, overstimulation, seeking attention, and so forth. In line with IPS's overall behavior policy, teachers try to create a positive, peaceful, and nurturing environment that encourages children to maintain self-control.

One of the most upsetting yet normal behaviors of early childhood is biting. With young preschoolers, social skills may be still developing. It may be difficult for young children to distinguish between what is a loving gesture and what hurts.

Young children may fully understand that when they bite, someone cries; but they not have yet connected all of the social consequences.

Parents will be notified if their child has been bitten and of the procedures the teacher has taken. The name of the child who did the biting will not be included when informing the parent of the incident. If the bite has broken the skin, it will be washed with soap and water. Both parents will be notified immediately and requested to call their child's health care provider for further instructions.

If biting becomes an ongoing behavior, the teacher will talk with parents and together they will carefully analyze the circumstances. Anecdotal information noting when the incident happened, where it happened, what precipitated the bite, who was involved, and the times of day the biting occurs will be recorded. A teacher/staff member will be assigned to stay in close proximity to the child to interrupt the biting behavior before it happens and to provide needed support.

Reasonable action will be taken to modify the environment, routines, or interactions within the group to help diminish the biting.

What to Bring

Please remember to label each item that your child brings to school (lunch box, backpack, coat, sweater, hat, mittens, boots, etc.).

*** Dress**

Your child should be dressed for active and participatory play. IPS does not want a child's creativity hampered because he/she is wearing clothing that should not get dirty.

Children go outside most days, so please dress your child appropriately.

In the winter, hat and mittens are needed every day. Snow pants and warm boots are important whenever there is snow on the ground.

*** Extra Clothes**

In school, at all times, each child should have at least one set of seasonal clothes that fit – pants, shirt, underwear, socks — which should remain in the child’s backpack. In addition, each child must have a change of clothes. Please provide a plastic storage box for extra clothing and other items.

*** Backpack**

At IPS we encourage children to be independent. Therefore, we strongly recommend a backpack that is easy for your child to manage when putting away his/her own things.

Each day your child needs to bring a backpack, clearly marked with your child’s name, to hold his or her lunch box, extra clothes, art, treasures, and important communication.

Please be sure to check the contents of this bag each night so that you can find important notes, view art projects, and so forth.

*** Diapers/Nappies, wipes and diaper/nappy ointment** (for children still being toilet-training)

*** Sunscreen/sun block**

*** Footwear to be worn inside the classroom** (e.g., slippers)

**** please label all personal items with your child’s name to avoid confusion.**

HEALTH POLICY

Illness

Germs spread quickly in a preschool environment. All children and staff stay healthier when sick persons stay at home. Common sense must prevail in the case of colds, which can range from a mild case of sniffles to a full-blown sinus infection or deep cough.

We use the EMERGENCY FORM to contact parents or another designated adult if your child develops symptoms of illness while in class. We will isolate your child in a comfortable, supervised place until he/she can be picked up.

If one or more of the following symptoms is present in your child, we will call you to pick up your child from preschool:

- temperature higher than 100° F
- loss of appetite
- nausea or vomiting
- red, pink, or crusty eyes or stomach ache
- earache or diarrhea
- rash/infection of skin or pale or flushed face or headache
- thick or greenish mucus from nose or cough
- loss of energy/decrease in activity/falling asleep or sore throat

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.

24 HOUR RULE: ANY CHILD WHO HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN THE PREVIOUS 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND CLASS.

Fever free: A child should be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Antibiotic timeline: A child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school

We strictly observe this health department regulation for children (and staff) to protect the health of everyone at IPS.

Parent must notify the office immediately if a child:

- Is diagnosed with any communicable diseases including strep throat, pink eye, lice, pinworms, or any other of the diseases common to a school environment. The notification is important so that IPS can inform the parents within your child's classroom to be on the lookout for symptoms. Please remember that IPS will not release the name of the child or family involved. We simply post "There has been a case of _____ reported"
- Has any **allergies** or if you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's health.
- Is taking **medication**, as medicine may affect your child's behavior.

If a child is absent for three days or more due to illness, the parent must provide a written statement from the physician stating that the child is well enough to return to school.

Unless we receive a doctor's note requesting a child to stay indoors, we expect every child to participate in outdoor play.

Head lice sometimes occurs in school because it is contagious and easily passed from child to child. You may want to look online for more information and to find examples of what lice look like in order to check your child's head correctly (www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment).

Please inform us immediately if your child has lice. We are required by licensing to follow certain procedures regarding the cleaning and removal of materials (dress-ups, etc.) within a classroom with lice.

We also reserve the right to implement additional procedures, such as head checks, if a persistent lice problem was to occur. Please get into the habit of routinely checking your child's head. If all parents check heads regularly, we can avoid any outbreaks in the school.

In accordance with Macedonian law for all certified nursery/pre-school facilities, IPS organizes periodical medical examinations for all children and teachers that, includes a nose and throat swab and optional blood test*. The first examination is scheduled for the beginning of September and second test is conducted after the winter break. If any child's test results show positive for bacterial infections at either of these mandatory tests the child will be required to stay at home until s/he produces a negative result, or following the first 24 hour period of a medical treatment.

In addition, if a teacher notes that your child is not feeling well and shows any of the above symptoms of sickness during the day, they will immediately call the parents/guardian to come and pick him/her up within 1 hour.

All parents/guardians are kindly asked to adhere to the IPS health measures to help keep IPS a safe and healthy environment for children and teachers alike. If any parent/guardian is found to be negligent of these measures, IPS teachers have the right not to accept the child at school until their symptoms have improved per the above recommendations.

* The costs of this mandatory tests needs to be covered by the parents. All subsequent testing arrangements and costs is the responsibility of the individual parent/guardian.

Medications

To ensure the safety and well-being of our children, IPS teachers will not administer any medications to a child unless specifically directed to do so by the child's parent or guardian. In this case, parents and guardians should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Please do not send medications in snack bags! Hand them over directly to the teacher in charge. She will keep them in a safe place out of reach of the children.
- The medication to be administered must be in the original container.
- The label should contain the child's full name, name of medication, schedule of administration, dosage and date.

Accidents and injuries

The IPS lead teachers are trained to perform basic First Aid in the event of an accident or injury. A well-stocked First Aid kit is readily available in the classroom. In the case of a serious accident or injury, IPS teachers will immediately contact the child's parents or guardian or, in their absence, the designated emergency contact person. All accidents and injuries are recorded in an Incident Report, which is then shown to the parent or guardian who is asked sign off on it.

Emergencies

IPS has an emergency preparedness plan that provides guidelines for a wide range of unlikely emergency situations from a naturally occurring weather condition to a terrorist attack. The safety of the children and staff is always the school's primary concern.

The staff members take emergency preparedness training and maintain an emergency preparedness plan for the school. Staff undergo emergency training every year, and the school runs two emergency evacuation drills in addition to monthly fire drills with the children.

Types of Emergencies

The types of emergencies that IPS prepares for include fire and explosions, severe storms, flooding, winter storms, earthquakes, unexpected utility failures, hazardous and radioactive materials, terrorism and other potentially violent situations, medical emergencies, and family/community concerns and/or violence.

Communication with parents of an Emergency Situation

IPS will communicate with parents during an emergency through either a text message sent to cell phones and/or a phone call from a member of IPS staff and/or email. If possible, staff will leave a message or a sign on the door.

Emergency Phone Contact Information for Each Child

IPS maintains emergency phone and email lists to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as a school closing or an evacuation. The Emergency Preparedness Information Form and the Emergency Form will be supplied during the enrollment process. These forms must be completed and returned to the office before the child's first day of class. It is important, if possible, that parents provide an emergency phone that can receive text messages. If your phone cannot receive text messages, please let IPS know so that the school can make other arrangements for reaching you.

The **Emergency Preparedness Information Form** includes at least one out-of-area contact and information for three local emergency contacts.

The **Emergency Form** includes the name and phone number of the child's local physician. The preschool has the right to call the physician or other emergency personnel in case of emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep emergency information up to date.

Field Trips

Field trips can be an important enriching experience for our children. Teachers plan trips appropriate for their class that will provide a well-rounded experience.

Information and permission slips will be sent home in school bags each time a field trip is planned. In order to attend a field trip, each child needs a signed permission slip and/or payment of any necessary fee.

No siblings may accompany you and your child on the field trip. A sibling is a distraction for the chaperoning parent and for the group and can present a liability for everyone.

Cell phones must be turned off while driving and should only be used for emergencies on field trips.

Playground

Whenever parents are on the playground with their child or other children, parents are responsible for supervision of their own child or children after school hours. Please do not leave a child or children alone or unsupervised on the playground at any time.

IPS asks that all children, under the supervision of their parents, abide by the same guidelines that we use during the school hours while using the playground with their children after school hours. These guidelines include:

The slide is a “down” slide, so children should be going feet first—on bottoms or stomachs. No head first. Children should slide to the bottom of the slide and move out of the way for the next person and should not be standing on or jumping off the slide.

Absolutely no tree climbing. This includes trees between the parking lot areas.

No climbing on top of the house--“the climber is for climbing” is the language we use during the school day.

Playing in the bushes is not allowed.

If your child is on the playground, you need to be with him/her to make sure that he/she is following these rules and that you are enforcing them to support our teachers during the school day.

It is important that the children have consistent rules for both school and non-school hours to ensure their safety during the school day. This way, they have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and manageable in a group care situation such as ours.

Volunteer Opportunities

IPS encourages parents to become involved in the preschool. Teachers regularly include parents in special celebrations and welcome parents who want to share special talents with the class. IPS also asks that parents share their talents and time to help make the school the special community it is. Here are some ways you can help:

- Class representative/room parent
- Fundraising
- Computer (website, assisting staff with database software, etc.)
- Library support

Fundraising

IPS holds fundraising events to earn money for specific improvements or classroom equipment. These fundraisers will be outlined in written communication. We request that families participate in these events and, in so doing, promote community spirit and financially support our high-quality program.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

IPS recognizes that, at times, parents or guardians may be dissatisfied with some aspect of the school's program or administration. In these cases, parents/guardians should take the following steps:

1. Talk over the area of concern directly with the involved party (teachers, Coordinator, or other parent/guardian).
2. If the matter is not sorted out to the parent's or guardian's satisfaction, s/he should put the matter in writing to the IPS Coordinator who will then set up a meeting to discuss the issue further.