

Parent Handbook

2024 – 2025

A. Statement of Purpose

Mission Statement

Vilnius Montessori preschool works to provide Montessori education to toddlers and preschool-aged children. Our goal is to strive at making children self-motivated, independent, self-learners, who have a love for work, are responsible, and care for each other and the environment. We aim to nurture children's development in an environment full of stimulating materials, encourage free movement and choice in the classroom, develop a love for learning that will last a lifetime, and help children become a 'whole person' by discovering and building on their talents and strengths.

Our Location

- **VMS - Latvių (Žvėrynas)**
Address: Latvių G. 16A, Vilnius

VMS Classrooms

Our locations have casa environments for children ages 3 – 7 years, and toddler environments for children ages 1 – 3 years.

B. School Administrative Policies

1. Registration

To enrol a child in VMS, parents are required to visit our school. We recommend visiting several other schools in Vilnius before making the decision as to which school you find most appropriate for your child and your family.

Please email us at hello@vms.lt to organize a tour of our environments.

Subsequent to the tour, the children together with their parents will be invited for an observation of the Montessori Work Cycle (daily class routine) which lasts up to 30 minutes. The child will be introduced to the school environment, teachers, and schoolmates.

We will email you the Admissions Agreement when vacancies are available. For registration, the VMS Admissions Agreement should be filled out, signed, and returned to us. Please note, that vacancies are filled on a first come first serve basis, upon receipt of the completed agreement. If the application for admission is accepted, an invoice will be issued for the non-refundable Administration Fee of 350 Euros, which must be paid to complete the registration process.

Upon completion of the registration process, the teachers would like to meet parents and children outside the school environment.

A summary of the documents to be submitted to VMS are as follows:

- VMS Admissions Agreement
- Child's birth certificate or passport copy/LT Residence Permit in case of a foreigner
- Health and Dental Form No. 027-1/a from a family doctor **(for catering purposes please ensure your doctor**

includes ALL dietary requirements/preferences in the health form).

2. Hours of Operation and Attendance

The school is open **Monday – Thursday 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM** and **Friday 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM**. Children should arrive no later than **8:45 AM**.

Regular attendance and consistency are important in the formative years, as they form good habits. As children are creating the people they will be in the future, they need to get into the routine of being punctual. Please try to arrange for the child's doctor visits or any other important appointments outside of school to be in the afternoons. We hope that parents cooperate with staff by maintaining timely and consistent attendance. Please see the Admissions Agreement for our policies concerning irregular attendance.

VMS hours and dismissal are as follows:

- Half-Day (Toddlers) – 7:30 AM - 11:30 AM
- Half-Day (Casa) – 7:30 AM - 12:15 PM
- Full-Day (Toddlers and Casa) – 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM
- After school is available from Monday -Thursday until 6:00 PM.
- Daily participation in the after-school program can be arranged with prior notice of at least 24 hours.

Please be punctual when picking up your children to avoid late pick-up fees and more importantly, emotional disorientation for children.

Late pickup fees will be applicable at 1 Euro per minute as follows:

- Half-Day (Toddlers) - from 11:35 AM
- Half-Day (Casa) - from 12:20 PM
- Full-Day (Toddlers and Casa) - from 4:30 PM
- After school - from 6:00 PM

These fees are payable by bank transfer, within 5 days of notification.



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3. School Fees

	Enrollment fee (non refundable)	Half day		Full day		Afters
		4 installments	1 installment	4 installments	1 installment	1 day
Toddlers (1-3 years)	400,00	1485,00	5280,00	1785,00	6240,00	25,00
Casa (3-6 years)	400,00	1485,00	5280,00	1635,00	5640,00	25,00

Breakfast & snack	3 eur/day
Lunch	6 eur/day
Dinner	3 eur/day
Afterschool snack	2 eur/day

4. Adaptation

At VMS, we endeavour to help children achieve greater independence at all times. For children to adapt to their new environment, they will need to build trust. It is important that parents build a trusting relationship with the staff first as this will become advantageous in your child's adaptation to the school.

It is mandatory that every new child attending VMS joins the **half-day program for the first four weeks** as part of their adaptation.

Prior to the child's first day at school, you will receive a welcome email that includes a tentative schedule for adaptation.

On the 1st day parents together with their children are invited to observe the class in progress for 30 - 45 minutes.

On the 2nd day, the parents are invited to leave their children at school for up to 30 minutes, and the following day for 45 minutes, and when children are able to stay one hour without crying, they are ready to stay for the 3-hour cycle.

Most children cry at the beginning, please have faith and trust that your child is safe and in good hands.

NOTE: We encourage you to not linger once you are at the school to drop off or pick up your child. Leaving swiftly is recommended.

5. Absences

We consider regular attendance extremely important for the welfare of your child, as children are encouraged to work individually, according to their choice of activities, and at their own pace. Which allows them to grasp the concept of

what they have been working on and supports the development of self-confidence. The freedom to repeat offered by the Montessori environment allows children to not only satisfy the inner need for repetition and experimentation, but also the consolidation of knowledge.

Please refrain from keeping your child at home without a serious reason such as illness or important appointments as absence without an important reason disrupts the child's routine and hinders progress.

6. Contacting the Administration and the Teaching Staff

The parents, whose children attend VMS are requested to communicate day-to-day questions directly with the classroom teachers. Please bear in mind that priority is given to working with children, therefore we reply as time permits. For any urgent matters, please contact our Administrator or Academic Director.

- **VMS - Latviq**
Email: admin@vms.lt
Tel: +370 650 16653, +370 655 52771, +370 655 78169 (for SMS/WhatsApp/Viber messages)

If there are any other clarifications needed, please do not hesitate to make a personal appointment for a meeting with our Academic Director. The best time is between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM.

- **VMS Administration**

VMS Academic Director/Montessori Teacher-Trainer

Ms. Needra de Silva

Tel: +37065508414

Email: hello@vms.lt, needra@vms.lt,

Administrator

Ms. Augustė Stankevičiūtė

Tel: +37064070875

Email: admin@vms.lt

In case you cannot reach the office by phone, please email us at admin@vms.lt and we will reply as soon as possible.

C. Important Information

1. Home and School

It is proven that there is a direct link between home and school. Most children's impressions of school, the teachers, and their learning stem from their parents' or guardians' views. Please work diligently to discuss the school, staff and

other students in a positive light in the presence of your child. We hope to keep the connection between home and school positive.

Parents will receive a monthly VMS Newsletter via email. It will list important dates, celebrations, songs, and themes planned for the classroom environments.

Parents and grandparents are welcome to share their professions and talents with the children's community. Teachers also invite the parents and grandparents to come in for a cooking session of the family's favourite dish.

2. Excursions and Field Trips

Students are often taken on walks to visit nearby parks, playgrounds, and historical buildings/monuments as part of the learning cycle.

In addition, we organize occasional field trips, theatre performances, etc. throughout the academic year, which are relevant and/or beneficial for student's learning and progress. There are some additional costs such as transportation, entrance fees that are applicable for participation.

3. Community Gatherings

We have several community events. Parents are invited to join us. These include:

- Appreciation Day
- Pumpkin Carving Event
- ICCB (parents and staff will run the stall)
- Spring Cleaning Event
- Easter Egg Decorating Event
- Community Field Trips

During the events parents can take the opportunity to get to know the community better. Children take great pride in having parents join the events.

4. Events and Holidays

Each year VMS hosts two celebratory events at a selected venue:

1. Winter Event: A winter themed sing-a-long, followed by a social buffet-style brunch.
2. Summer Event: An end of year summer brunch for families to come together in celebration of the academic year.

School is closed on these dates. Additional costs set by the venue for participation are applicable.

Please refer to the Academic calendar in our website www.vms.lt for all important dates, events and holidays.

5. Illness Policy:

Dear Parents,

Please use the following guidelines to establish whether or not your Child is ill, and should not come to contact with other children in the pre-school, and when the child should return to pre-school after an absence due to illness.

FEVER	Temperature must be normal (36,6-37 C°) before returning to pre-school.
VOMITING	Child must be asymptomatic for 24 hours before returning.
DIARRHEA	Child must be asymptomatic for 24 hours before returning.
BRONCHITIS	Children with deep cough, and being treated with antibiotics should stay at home until the symptoms are gone.

EAR INFECTION	After treatment (antibiotics or other) ear aches and fever must be gone before returning to school.
CONJUNCTIVITIS	Eyes must be treated and free of puss before returning to school.
HEAVY VISIBLE COLD/ VIRUS INFECTION	If symptoms like severely running nose, cough, fever, sore throat accompany the child please let the child get better before returning to school. NOTE: some children have lightly running nose, or a light cough a lot of the time. If the symptoms have been judged by the child's doctor as not transferable the child may attend school.
USUAL CHILDHOOD CONTAGIOUS DISEASES	Measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox.
HEAD LICE	The child must be free of lice and nits before returning to school.

6. Dressing for School

Please make sure your child is dressed in comfortable clothing appropriate for school and the weather. When your child is on the way to independence, their clothing should have no complicated buttons, buckles, latches, laces, etc. Dressing up is the first activity that children will be learning to master on their own. Therefore, pants/skirts with easily pulled-up elastic waists, and shoes with velcro fastening are preferable. Please be sure to provide a pair of indoor shoes, and two extra sets of clothes in case of getting dirty or if an accident should occur in class. Rain/winter boots and rain/snow pants and jackets are mandatory in winter. To prevent losing clothes, please label all articles of clothing.

NOTE: Kindly ensure that children wear plain clothing without distracting images and/or embellishments.

Weather appropriate clothing must be provided for outdoor play:

Autumn And Spring Terms – Thin Waterproof Pants, Jacket, Rubber Boots, Waterproof Gloves

Winter Term – Warm Waterproof Pants And Jacket, Thermal Waterproof Boots, Hat, Scarf, Mittens Or Gloves (Waterproof)

Summer Term – Sun Hat, Tick & Mosquito Spray, Safe Outdoor Shoes

Because of independence or safety concerns this type of clothing will not be permitted:

- Umbrellas
- Long scarfs, dresses or skirts
- High-heel shoes
- Expensive (or special in other ways) clothes when getting them dirty or damaged may become a concern
- Electronics/watches
- Distracting clothing/jewellery

NOTE: At VMS children are allowed to play freely outside, not limited by the teachers, which means that sometimes they will get dirty. If this happens your child will be able to change to clean clothes once they go inside the school. Experimenting with the outdoors, dirt, water, rain is a very important part of each child's development and we hope that parents/caregivers will appreciate it as such.

7. Toys

VMS has a policy of “**no toys at school**”. Children are requested to leave all toys/pillows at home. This is because it

poses a distraction to the child at school. All types of toys/pillows will be sent home with the parents.

8. Nap / rest time

Daily nap-time is from 1:30 PM till 3:00 PM. Mattresses and linen are provided for each child by the school. Children enrolled in the pre-primary programme will rest for 45 minutes and join the pre-primary class.

9. Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are an exciting time for children.

A birthday is a day to share with friends what is important to your child. Birthdays at VMS include the traditional Montessori 'Walk Around the Sun'. This allows the child to signify each year in their life. One photo from each year of your child's life can be brought to school. **Please do not send an entire album with your child's photos.** The teacher will take photos of the celebration, which then will be shared with parents.

If you wish, a treat which your child can share with friends is welcome. We recommend healthy options such as fruit. **Please do not send plates, balloons, cups or other additional attributes.** Parents are welcome to join their children for their birthday celebrations at VMS! Please coordinate this with your classroom teacher.

NOTE: Invitations to private birthday parties (outside the school) should not be given to the children within the school premises, unless all school children are invited.

10. Meals and Snacks

VMS provides full nutrition. Children are served three hot meals.

- Breakfast is served from 8:15 AM - 8:45 AM (Children, who are late will miss breakfast!)
- Lunch is from 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM
- Afternoon meal is from 3:15 PM - 3:45 PM

VMS promotes healthy eating and food is catered to VMS daily.

VMS can cater for dietary requirements **ONLY IF** they are included in the Health form provided during enrolment.

NOTE: Please do not send food or drinks with your child to school. Any food or drinks will be sent home with the child.

11. Progress Reports

Progress Reports are issued in June. If you would like to discuss the Child's progress, any constraints, or any recommendations, contact the Academic Director/Head of Staff for a personal meeting.

12. Open-Door Policy and Observations

In March, parents are welcome to visit VMS and watch their child at work by making a prior appointment with the Academic Director/Head of Staff.

NOTE: If throughout the year the parent wishes to visit their child at school, they may sign up for observations prior to the visit. However, we do recommend that parents let the child settle in to the school environment before coming for in-house observations. The adaptation period usually lasts for 4-8 weeks if attendance is uninterrupted.

13. Accidents and Emergency Treatment

Even under our watchful eye sometimes children may have accidents at the pre-school. Therefore please:

- Update the child's pre-school file with all correct information on emergency contacts and health information. At least two emergency contacts need to be stated on the registration form.
- In case of minor injury parents will be informed when necessary. An Incident Form will be given to you by the teacher to read and sign.
- In case of a serious accident or need of medical treatment the pre-school staff will:
 1. Call an ambulance;
 2. Provide First Aid;
 3. Keep the child comforted;
 4. Call the parents / guardians.

14. Special care for a child

If in the first 6 weeks of the child's attendance it becomes apparent that the child requires additional care of an adult, we will schedule a meeting with the family to inform them that we require the child to be assisted by an adult at all times spent in school. The expenses of the assistant teacher must be covered by the child's family. Children who need special care may only attend our Half-Day program.

15. A Word about Discipline

Our goal concerning discipline is to help each child develop self-guiding/choice-making skills. This is an important part of Normalisation (a term in education first used by Maria Montessori). Positive behaviour models are followed at all times by teachers, this encourages children to do the same. The teachers will present and review social rules called Grace & Courtesies with children to provide affirmations for positive behaviour models.

The VMS Grace & Courtesies

1. I am willing to be friendly and polite to others in the classroom and at home.
2. I say "please" and "thank you" when I want something.
3. I am careful with the work of others.
4. I speak quietly for others to listen.
5. I have walking feet in the classroom and I am faster when I am outside.
6. I respect other people's opinions.
7. I don't hit, kick, pull, or push because I do not want to be treated in that way either.
8. I know how to wait my turn. Sometimes I know I will not get a turn, but there is always the next time.
9. I like to work on my own and with others.
10. I make sure to clean up after my work is complete.

11. I like to question everything.

16. Montessori Workshops with Parents: Help Me Raise My Child

As professionals and teachers, we work with multiple families, children, mommies, and daddies and collect valuable experience along the way. We offer to share our experience with you to help you raise your child. We invite you to come to workshops, where we will discuss various issues connected with raising children. The topics discussed will range from “Supporting Your Child’s Independence – Why Is It Important” to “Having a Sibling: What it Means for Your Child”, to “What Are My Child’s Sensitive Periods – How to Observe.”

Parenting Workshops will be held at the VMS on one Friday of the month (when possible) from 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM in the school. The children, whose parents attend the workshop will spend this time with the teachers.

17. Instead of this say that

By Simone Davies, “The Montessori Toddler. A Parent’s Guide To Raising a Curious and Responsible Human Being”, Workman Publishing, New York, 2019

To...	Instead of this...	Say that...
See through our child’s eyes	Denying: “Don’t worry about it. It’s just a bump.”	See the situation from their perspective / acknowledge their feelings: “Was that a shock? A bump can hurt.”
	Judging: “You are always taking toys from other children.”	Translate to them: “It sounds like you would like to have a turn when they are all finished.”
	Blaming, lecturing: “You shouldn’t have...” “What you should do is...”	Seek to understand by guessing how they feel: “Are you telling me...?” “It looks like you...” “Are you feeling...?” “It seems like...”
Build independence	Telling them what not to do: “Don’t drop the glass!”	Tell how to have success: “Use two hands.”
	Avoid always taking the lead: “Let’s go take a look at the puzzles.”	Follow the child: Say nothing (wait to see what they choose).
Help our child	Taking over and doing it for them: “Let me do it for you...”	Step in as little as possible and as much as necessary: “Would you like me / someone to help you?” “Would you like to see how I do it?” “Have you tried...?”
Help our child love learning	Correcting: “No, it’s an elephant.”	Teach by teaching: “Ah, you wanted to show me the rhinoceros.” (Then make a note to teach them <i>about elephants</i> another time.)
Cultivate curiosity	Giving the answers to all the questions: “The sky is blue because...”	Encourage them to find out: “I don’t know. Let’s find out together.”

Help our child assess for themselves, i.e., cultivate intrinsic motivation	<p>Praising:</p> <p>“Good job!”</p> <p>“Good boy / girl!”</p>	<p>Give feedback / describe effort:</p> <p>“You put all the trucks in the basket.”</p> <p>Sum it up with a word:</p> <p>“Now it’s what I call resourceful.”</p> <p>Describe how we feel:</p> <p>“It’s a pleasure to walk into a tidy room.”</p>
Share	<p>Forcing them to share now:</p> <p>“Give them a turn now.”</p>	<p>Allow them to finish and share by taking turns:</p> <p>“It looks like they are playing with it right now. It will be available soon.”</p>
Accept our child for who they are	<p>Dismissing their angry / big feelings:</p> <p>“It’s just a spoon, don’t be silly.”</p>	<p>Acknowledge and allow all feelings:</p> <p>“It looks like you are upset that your favourite spoon isn’t available.”</p>
Remind them of a house / ground rule	<p>Shouting:</p> <p>“No fighting!”</p>	<p>Have a few house rules:</p> <p>“I can’t let you hurt them. Use your words to tell them what you would like.”</p>
Cultivate cooperation	<p>Saying no:</p> <p>“Don’t touch the baby!”</p>	<p>Use positive language:</p> <p>“We are gentle with the baby.”</p>
	<p>Getting involved in the problem:</p> <p>“You are driving me crazy. Why don’t you get dressed? We need to leave!”</p>	<p>Find ways to solve the problem:</p> <p>“How can we solve the problem? Let’s make a checklist of all the things we need to do to leave in the morning.”</p>
	<p>Getting frustrated:</p> <p>“Why don’t you listen to me? It’s bath time.”</p>	<p>Find ways to involve the child:</p> <p>“Would you like to hop to the bath like a rabbit or walk sideways on all fours like a crab?”</p>
	<p>Nagging, shouting:</p> <p>“How many times do I have to ask you to put your shoes on?”</p>	<p>Use one word:</p> <p>“Shoes.”</p>
	<p>Repeating ourselves:</p> <p>“Don’t go near the oven again.”</p>	<p>Write a note:</p> <p>“The sign says, “It’s hot.”</p>
	<p>Accusing:</p> <p>“Why don’t you ever put away your toys when you are finished?”</p>	<p>Show them:</p> <p>“It goes here” (while tapping the shelf).</p>
Help our child to be responsible	<p>Threatening, punishing, bribing, or giving a time-out:</p> <p>“If you’ll do that again, I’ll...”</p> <p>“If you come now, I’ll give you a sticker.”</p> <p>“Go to time out to think about what you have done!”</p>	<p>Help them calm down and then make amends:</p> <p>“You look upset. Would you like a cuddle?”</p> <p>“Would you like your calm place to calm down?”</p> <p>THEN</p> <p>“Our friend is crying. How can we make it up to them?”</p>
Communicate limits	<p>Avoiding conflict, being very strict, or setting a bad example:</p>	<p>Set a kind and clear limit:</p> <p>“I can’t let you hit / throw / bite me. I’m going to put you down. If you need to bite, you can bite on this apple.</p>

	<p>"They are too young to know what they are doing."</p> <p>If you bite me again, I will bite you and let you see if you like it."</p>	
Avoiding sibling rivalry	<p>Comparing siblings:</p> <p>"Why don't you eat your peas like your sister / brother?"</p>	<p>Treat each child uniquely:</p> <p>"It sounds like you would like some more."</p>
	<p>Putting the eldest in charge:</p> <p>"You are a big brother / sister now. You should know better."</p>	<p>Give all siblings responsibility:</p> <p>"Can you both look after each other while I go to the bathroom?"</p>
Be neutral in sibling disputes	<p>Trying to decide who is right and wrong:</p> <p>"What happened here?"</p>	<p>Leave them to solve the problem:</p> <p>"I see the two kids who want the same toy. I know you can come up with a solution that both of you are happy with."</p>
Avoid using roles and labels	<p>Putting a child in a role or using labels:</p> <p>"They are the shy one / the clever one."</p>	<p>Give them another view of themselves:</p> <p>"I noticed that you asked for help all by yourself."</p>
Communicate with family / other caregivers	<p>Getting angry with a family member:</p> <p>"Why are you shouting at them?"</p>	<p>Translate for them:</p> <p>"It sounds like your Mommy / Daddy would like you to..."</p>

18. A Child's Manifesto

- Don't spoil me.
 - I know quite well I shouldn't have all I ask for. I'm only testing you.
- Don't be afraid to be politely firm with me.
 - I prefer it, it makes me feel secure.
- Don't let me form bad habits.
 - I have to rely on you to detect them in early stages.
- Don't let me feel smaller than I am.
 - It only makes me behave stupidly "big".
- Don't correct me in front of other people if you can help it.
 - I'll take more notice if you talk quietly in private.
- Don't protect me from consequences.
 - I need to learn the painful way sometimes.
- Don't make me feel my mistakes are sins.
 - It upsets my sense of values.
- Don't be too upset when I say "I hate you."
 - It isn't you I hate but your power to thwart me.
- Don't take too much notice of my self-ailments.
 - Sometimes they get me the attention I need.
- Don't nag.
 - If you do, I'll have to protect myself by appearing deaf.



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- Don't forget that I can't explain myself as well as I'd like.
 - This is why I'm not always very accurate.
- Don't tax my honesty too much.
 - I'm easily frightened into telling lies.
- Don't be inconsistent.
 - It confuses me and makes me lose faith in you.
- Don't put me off when I ask questions.
 - If you do, you'll find I stop asking and seek information elsewhere.
- Don't tell me my fears are silly.
 - They are terribly real.
- Don't ever suggest that you are perfect or infallible.
 - It gives me too great a shock when I find out you are neither.
- Don't ever think it's beneath your dignity to apologise to me.
 - An honest apology makes me surprisingly warm to you.
- Don't forget I love experimenting.
 - I can't get on without it, so please put up with it.
- Don't forget how quickly I'm growing up.
 - It must be hard to keep pace with me, but please try.