

THE WILLOW SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK



The Willow School

2026–2027 School Year

The Willow School
1911 West Avenue H, Temple, TX

A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDERS

Dear Families,

Welcome to The Willow School! We are so grateful you have chosen to join our community.

The Willow School was established in May 2023 with a mission to bring more Montessori education to the Central Texas area. We renovated and repurposed an older building to create a warm, inviting learning environment for children and families.

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide to our school policies, procedures, and expectations. Please read it carefully and keep it accessible throughout the year. Our goal is to create a partnership with families built on trust, communication, and shared support for each child.

If you ever have questions, we encourage you to reach out through Brightwheel or contact the office. We are here to help.

With gratitude,
Taylore Oldfield-Jackson & Kyah Spence
Founders, The Willow School

Table of Contents

THE WILLOW SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK	1
2026–2027 School Year	1
A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDERS	2
PROGRAM ORIENTATION	7
About The Willow School	7
Mission Statement	7
Vision Statement	7
Purpose Statement	7
Montessori Philosophy	7
Goals and Outcomes for Children	8
Goals and Outcomes for Families	9
PROGRAM INFORMATION	10
Hours of Operation	10
School Calendar & Closures	10
Attendance Policy	10
Office Hours & Scheduling Support	11
Contact Information	11
Tuition & Payment Methods	11
Technology	12
Liability Insurance Statement	13
ENROLLMENT & SUBMISSION OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	14
Enrollment Process	14
Required Documents	14
Immunization Requirements	15
Vaccine Exemption Affidavit	15
Employee Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Policy	16
THE WILLOW SCHOOL PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)	17
TEXAS RISING STAR	18
LICENSING INFORMATION & PARENT RESOURCES	19
Parental Review & Discussion Procedures	19
Childcare Licensing Communication	20
Gang-free Zone	21
Preventing & Responding to Child Abuse & Neglect	22
FAMILY PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNICATION	24
Parent Participation	24
Parent Communication	24
Confidentiality Policy	25
Conflict of Interest	26
CLOTHING & SUPPLIES	29
Required Supplies	29

Classroom Materials	30
Clothing & Footwear	32
ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE EXPECTATIONS	34
Parking Lot & Vehicle Safety	34
Doors and Gates Policy	34
Cell Phones During Arrival and Departure	34
Check-In / Check-Out iPads	35
Arrival Times	35
Toddler & Primary Classroom Drop-Off Expectations	35
Infant Drop-off	36
Classroom Pick-Up Expectations	36
Release of Children / Authorized Pick-Up	36
Separation and Adjustment	37
Parent Rights & Access	37
Custody, Court Orders, and Unplanned Custody Issues	38
Transportation	38
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS	39
Infant Classroom (6 Weeks – 15 Months)	39
Toddler Classroom (15 – 33 Months)	39
Primary Classroom (34 Months – 6 Years)	39
Transitioning Between Classrooms	40
Consistent Communication with Families	40
Toileting Policy (Toddler Classroom)	40
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENTS	42
Curriculum Overview	42
Kindergarten Curriculum	42
Language Enrichment	43
Enrichment Programs	43
Assessments	44
MONTESSORI DOMAINS	46
Montessori Practical Life	46
Sensorial	46
Mathematics	46
Language	46
Cultural Studies	47
Cultural Celebrations	48
STEM & Outdoor Exploration	48
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & OUTDOOR PLAY	49
Benefits, Types, & Settings of Physical Activity and Outdoor Play	49
Duration of Physical Activity	49
Extreme Weather Conditions	49

Water Play Safety	50
Playground Maintenance	51
GUIDANCE, BEHAVIOR SUPPORT, & DISENROLLMENT POLICY	52
Guiding Principles	52
Challenging Behavior Policy	53
Intervention Plan	54
Biting Policy	54
Disenrollment	55
SAFE ENVIRONMENT	57
Classroom Safety practices	57
Supervision, Ratios, and Safety	57
Security Cameras and Classroom Monitoring	57
Photography and Video Policy	58
Animals in the Classroom	58
Staffing and Professional Standards	59
HEALTH & WELLNESS	61
Illness Exclusion	61
Communicable Illness	61
Chronic Symptoms	62
Illness Procedures	62
Illness Prevention	62
Temperature Screening (Ear & Forehead Only)	62
Communication & Pick-up Expectations for Illnesses & Incidents	63
Daily Health Checks	63
Return to Care After Illness	64
Return to Care After Injury Requiring Medical Care	64
Incident / Illness Reports (Child Care Licensing Form)	65
Sibling Illness Policy	65
MEDICAL EMERGENCIES & EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE PROCEDURES	66
In the Event of a Medical Emergency	66
Emergency Medical Transportation	66
Parent/Guardian Responsibility	66
Documentation	66
Medication Administration	66
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DRILLS	68
Emergency Relocation Site(s)	68
Emergency Reunification Procedures	68
Emergency Drills	68
CLEANING & DISINFECTION: Force of Nature	69
NUTRITION & SLEEP	70
Food Safety and Meal Practices	70

Food Storage & Utensils	70
Food Expectations	70
Restricted Foods	70
Breakfast	70
Snacks	71
Anti-Choking Devices (Dechokers)	71
Allergies and Food Restrictions	71
Nut-Free Infant Classroom (Allergen Safety)	71
Water	71
Infant Feeding	72
Breastfeeding Support Policy	73
Rest Period	75
Safe Sleep Policy (Infants)	75
Infant Soothing	76
INCLUSIVE SERVICES & CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL CARE NEEDS	77
Identification and Assessment	77
Individualized Care Plan (ICP)	77
Inclusive Environment	77
Trained Staff and Ongoing Support	78
Outside Therapy Policy	78
Collaboration and Communication	78
Life-Threatening Allergies or Medical Needs	79
POLICY ADMINISTRATION	80
Grievance Procedure	80
Staff Qualifications & Ongoing Professional Development	80
HANDBOOK UPDATES & ACKNOWLEDGMENT	81
PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM	82

PROGRAM ORIENTATION

About The Willow School

Welcome to The Willow School! Our school was established in May 2023 with a mission to bring more Montessori education to the Central Texas area. We renovated and repurposed an older building to create a warm, inviting learning environment for children and families.

We are located at: 1911 West Avenue H, Temple, TX

We welcome families from all backgrounds and are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive school community.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to cultivate holistic development, critical thinking, and practical life skills through the principles of Montessori education. We strive to enable students to thrive academically, socially, emotionally and to positively impact their communities and the world at large.

Vision Statement

We envision a world where every individual, like the graceful willow tree, stands tall, embraces their inner strength, and flourishes in the face of challenges. Guided by the Montessori philosophy and grounded in the principles of survival, strength, and stability, we strive to be a beacon of inspiration and transformation, nurturing resilient individuals who not only thrive academically but also grow into compassionate, empathetic global citizens.

Purpose Statement

We seek to create a nurturing environment that fosters resiliency, nourishes social-emotional growth, empowers children to become independent thinkers, and ignites a passion for lifelong learning.

Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori philosophy was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. Montessori education is built on the belief that children learn best through hands-on experiences, freedom within limits, and a thoughtfully prepared environment.

At The Willow School, Montessori principles guide our daily work through:

- Independence and responsibility
- Respect for the child
- Purposeful movement and meaningful work
- Mixed-age community and peer learning
- Calm, consistent guidance and clear expectations

Goals and Outcomes for Children

Independence and Confidence

- Foster independence by encouraging children to care for themselves, others, and their environment.
- Support the development of positive self-esteem through meaningful work and real-life responsibilities.
- Guide children toward becoming capable, responsible, and self-motivated individuals.

Respect for the Child

- Follow the child through careful observation, recognizing individual interests, readiness, and learning styles.
- Honor the uniqueness of each child and nurture their individual strengths and abilities.
- Provide consistent experiences of belonging, acceptance, and encouragement.

Love of Learning

- Encourage curiosity, exploration, and deep concentration through hands-on Montessori materials.
- Provide uninterrupted work periods that allow children to engage fully in purposeful activity.
- Maintain a well-prepared, orderly, and beautiful environment that promotes freedom within limits.
- Offer children meaningful choices within a structured and supportive classroom community.

Social and Emotional Development

- Guide children in developing respectful, peaceful relationships.
- Model and teach kindness, empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.
- Support children in learning constructive conflict resolution and effective communication.
- Help children build trust and confidence in relationships with peers and adults.

Moral and Community Awareness

- Support the development of integrity, responsibility, and sound judgment.
- Encourage respect for diversity and affirm human differences through a commitment to bias-free education.
- Cultivate awareness of community, shared responsibility, and care for the environment.

Goals and Outcomes for Families

We believe a strong partnership between home and school is essential to a child's success. We strive to ensure families:

Feel Valued and Supported

- Experience respect for their family values, culture, language, and traditions.
- Feel welcomed as important members of our school community.

Engage in Collaborative Partnership

- Communicate openly and consistently with staff.
- Work together with teachers to support their child's developmental growth.
- Develop a deeper understanding of Montessori philosophy and how it fosters independence, responsibility, and lifelong learning.

Participate in School Life

- Have opportunities to volunteer and engage in school activities such as classroom support, events, surveys, and leadership roles.
- Build strong, transparent relationships with staff, working together to support positive outcomes for their child.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Hours of Operation

Minimum Standards 746.501(2)

The Willow School classrooms are open:

7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

The Willow School is a year-round school. Operational months are June to May. Please refer to the school calendar for closures and special dates. The calendar is subject to change. Parents will be notified of any changes in advance.

School Calendar & Closures

The Willow School generally aligns major school closures and holidays with Temple ISD. However, because we are a private Montessori program and operate year-round, our calendar may differ. Families should refer to The Willow School calendar for official closure dates.

Bad Weather

The Willow School will follow Temple ISD for all bad weather closures. We will do our best to provide updates as promptly as possible regarding any schedule changes.

Emergency Closure

In the event that The Willow School must close due to an emergency situation (including, but not limited to, loss of power, loss of water, or other unforeseen circumstances), parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

Parents/guardians are required to pick up their child **within one (1) hour of notification**. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the child's designated emergency contacts will be called and must be available to pick up the child within the same timeframe.

Attendance Policy

Attendance & Absence Notification

Regular attendance supports routine, learning, and classroom consistency.

If your child will be absent, families should notify your child's teacher through Brightwheel as soon as possible. Please do not notify staff at pick-up or drop-off of upcoming absences.

Kindergarten Attendance Policy

Regular attendance supports routine, confidence, and academic growth.

Kindergarten students are expected to attend daily and arrive on time. Families should report absences promptly.

If a student accumulates ten (10) unexcused absences, a meeting with administration will be scheduled.

Office Hours & Scheduling Support

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

During office hours, families may contact administration for:

- Enrollment questions
- Billing and tuition support
- Documentation submission
- Policy clarification
- Scheduling conferences

Families may request meeting times outside office hours by messaging administration through Brightwheel. Administration will work with families to schedule times outside office hours as availability allows.

Contact Information

School phone number: (254) 561-1112

School e-mail: thewillowschooltx@outlook.com

Tuition & Payment Methods

Tuition is billed monthly and due on the 1st of each month.

Families may pay tuition by:

- ACH Draft through Brightwheel
- Check

Late Payment / Returned Payments

- A late fee of \$10 per day may be applied when tuition is past due.
- Returned payment fee: \$25 (Plus additional late fees as applicable)

If a check is returned:

- A returned check fee will be applied
- Future tuition payments must be made through Brightwheel (ACH) only

If tuition becomes two (2) weeks overdue, the child may be suspended until the account is current.

Late Pick-Up & Fee

The Willow School closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. All children must be picked up and off school property by closing time.

A late fee of \$10 per 5-minute interval will be charged beginning at 6:01 p.m.

Late time is calculated based on the time the child and parent/guardian exit school property.

Examples:

- Exiting at 6:01 p.m. = \$10
- Exiting at 6:06 p.m. = \$20
- Exiting at 6:11 p.m. = \$30

Late fees are billed through Brightwheel and must be paid within one week of being billed.

Repeated Late Pick-Up

Repeated late pick-ups may require:

- A conference with administration
- A written plan for timely pick-up
- Review of continued enrollment if late pick-ups become excessive or unsafe

Late pick-up impacts staff ratios, safety procedures, and closing responsibilities.

Tuition Discount

At this time, The Willow School does not offer tuition discounts. As a new and growing business, we are focused on building a strong foundation and maintaining the highest quality experience for our students and families.

We would love to offer discounts in the future, and as we continue to grow, we will revisit this possibility.

Technology

Staff Technology

Per childcare licensing, staff are not permitted to use their personal devices while in ratio. Staff will only use tables for:

- Attendance/check-in/out systems
- Brightwheel documentation and communication
- Licensing documentation
- Emergency/safety needs

Screen-Free

At The Willow School, we maintain a screen-free learning environment for children.

Children do not use:

- Tablets/iPads
- Computers
- Televisions
- Phones or smart devices
- Screen-based educational programs

We believe children learn best through:

- Hands-on exploration
- Meaningful conversation
- Movement and real-world experiences
- Montessori materials that build concentration and independence

Personal Devices

Children may not bring personal devices (Phones/tablets/smart watches used for games/calls) to school. If brought accidentally, they must remain in the child's bag and will not be used.

Liability Insurance Statement

The Willow School maintains comprehensive liability insurance coverage. Proof of insurance is available for review upon request.

ENROLLMENT & SUBMISSION OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Enrollment Process

Enrollment typically includes:

- Inquiry and program information
- Tour
- Application through Brightwheel + \$100 application fee
- Completion of required licensing and registration forms
- Start date confirmation after required documents are submitted and approved.
- Parent Orientation

Two-Week Trial Period

All new students complete a two-week trial period.

During this time, staff observe and support:

- Adjustment and separation transitions
- Classroom participation
- Peer interaction
- Independence skills (Age-appropriate)
- Engagement in the Montessori environment

The two-week trial period allows us to ensure that our program is the best fit for your child's needs. If concerns arise during this time and continued enrollment is not recommended, the family will be notified, and next steps will be discussed.

Required Documents

To complete enrollment at The Willow School, all required documentation must be submitted **three days prior** to a child's first day of attendance. **Enrollment is not considered complete until all paperwork has been received and reviewed.**

Paper Copies (submitted to the school office):

- Registration paperwork
 - Emergency contacts (**emergency contact cannot be a guardian**) - to be updated as needed
 - Authorized pick-up list- to be updated as needed
- Current immunization records- to be updated as children receive vaccinations
- Healthcare Provider Statement- to be updated annually

- This statement must clearly indicate that the child has been examined by a licensed healthcare provider within the past 12 months and is medically cleared to participate in childcare.
- **If your child is overdue for routine health services, you must provide proof of a scheduled appointment before your child may enter or remain enrolled in the program.**

Brightwheel Documents (completed electronically):

- Infant Feeding Plan (if applicable)- to be updated monthly
- Guardian phone numbers and contact information- to be updated as needed
- Sunscreen & Bug Spray Authorization
- Disclosure of Student Food Allergy or Other Disability- to be updated as needed
- Parent Association Interest Form
- Photo Release Form

Other Records:

- Hearing and vision screening results (Required for children who are 4 years old on or before September 1 of the current school year)
- Allergy and medical action plans
- Any additional documentation required by licensing or administration

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure all documents are accurate, complete, and kept up to date.

Immunization Requirements

Children must have current immunization records or a Vaccine Exemption Affidavit on file as required by Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards.

Vaccine Records

Families are responsible for:

- Submitting updated immunization records when vaccines are received
- Ensuring records remain current and on file at The Willow School

Vaccine Exemption Affidavit

Children who are not vaccinated must have a State of Texas approved vaccine exemption affidavit on file. The affidavit must be notarized and submitted to administration prior to attendance.

Families are responsible for:

- Renewing the affidavit on time and providing the updated notarized document to the school before expiration. The vaccine exemption affidavit expires every two (2) years from the date it is notarized.

- Children may be excluded from care if required immunization records or valid exemption documentation is not current and on file.

Employee Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Policy

The Willow School is committed to protecting children and staff from vaccine-preventable diseases.

The Willow School will:

- Maintain awareness of vaccine-preventable diseases that may impact children in care.
- Encourage staff to stay up to date on recommended vaccines.
- Follow Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards regarding infection control and exclusion.
- Notify families as required when a vaccine-preventable disease exposure occurs.
- Exclude children who are under-immunized when required for safety during outbreaks, in accordance with licensing guidance.

THE WILLOW SCHOOL PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The Willow School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The PTO plays an active and supportive role in our school community. They meet monthly at the school.

Through various fundraising efforts throughout the year, the PTO provides quarterly donations of classroom supplies to support teachers and students. In addition, the PTO helps fund larger needs such as equipment purchases, campus improvements, and facility renovations.

We are grateful for the PTO's continued partnership and dedication to enhancing the educational experience for all Willow School students.

TEXAS RISING STAR

The Willow School is proud to be a 3-Star Texas Rising Star (TRS) provider.

Texas Rising Star is the State of Texas' quality rating system for early childhood programs that go above and beyond minimum licensing standards. Our 3-Star designation reflects our commitment to providing high-quality care and education.

As a 3-Star provider, we maintain:

- Qualified and continuously trained teachers
- Strong, nurturing teacher–child interactions
- A research-based curriculum aligned with Texas Early Learning Guidelines
- Engaging, developmentally appropriate classroom environments

We participate in regular evaluations and ongoing improvement efforts to ensure we continue providing a safe, supportive, and enriching experience for every child.

For more information, visit: www.texasrisingstar.org

LICENSING INFORMATION & PARENT RESOURCES

Minimum Standards 746.501(23)

Minimum Standards 746.501(24)

Texas has strict licensing requirements for childcare facilities to ensure the safety and well-being of children in their care. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is responsible for licensing and regulating all child-care centers and homes in the state.

These can be found by visiting:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/default.asp

To obtain a license, child-care centers and homes must meet certain requirements, including background checks for staff members, safety standards for the physical environment, and appropriate ratios of staff to children. Facilities are also required to have a written plan for emergencies and to provide ongoing training for staff members.

The DFPS regularly inspects licensed facilities to ensure that they are meeting all requirements and providing a safe and healthy environment for children. Parents can access information about licensed facilities in their area through the DFPS website, and are encouraged to report any concerns or complaints about a facility to the agency.

Parental Review & Discussion Procedures

Parents/guardians are welcome to review and discuss their child's care, classroom experience, and school policies with administration.

1. **Scheduled Meetings:** Parents are encouraged to schedule meetings with the school director to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about the policies and procedures.
2. **Communication Channels:** Parents may choose to initiate discussions through the Brightwheel Application or by emailing thewillowschooltx@outlook.com. The center director will respond promptly and coordinate a meeting if necessary.
3. **Review Materials:** Parents are provided with a copy of the school's policies and procedures handbook upon enrollment. This handbook serves as a reference guide and includes information on various aspects such as health and safety, daily routines, discipline, and enrollment requirements.

The Willow School will make every effort to listen respectfully, address concerns in a timely manner, and partner with families to support each child's success.

Childcare Licensing Communication

The Willow School is regulated by Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Child Care Licensing. Parents/guardians have the right to contact licensing with questions or concerns at any time.

Contacting the Local Child Care Licensing Office

Local Licensing Office

Address: 4501 General Bruce Drive, Suite 20, Temple, TX 76502

Phone Number: 254-770-2660

Website: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/safety/child-care/contact-child-care-regulation>

Accessing the HHSC Website

Visit: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/>

Use the search bar to locate child care licensing information, resources, and updates.

Access to Minimum Standards

Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards are available online and may be reviewed at any time.

Families may access Minimum Standards through:

- [The HHSC website](#) (Child Care Licensing section)
- The Willow School website: www.thewillowschooltx.com (Minimum Standards link and PDF available)

Access to Licensing Inspection Reports

The Willow School maintains a copy of the most recent licensing inspection report on-site.

Parents/guardians may request a physical copy at any time.

Notification of Updates

If Minimum Standards or licensing requirements are updated, families will be notified as needed through school communication channels such as:

- Brightwheel
- Email
- Parent notices

Parents/guardians have the right to:

- Enter and examine the center during hours of operation without advance notice
- File a complaint against the center
- Review publicly accessible records
- Review written records concerning their child
- Receive information on how to access the center's compliance history online
- Receive licensing contact information (Posted on the Parent Communication Board)
- Be free from retaliatory action by the center for exercising these rights

Parents may request access to their child's records at any time. The Willow School will provide records within a reasonable timeframe and in accordance with licensing requirements.

Additional Information

Licensing contact information and required postings are available at the school and may be viewed on the Parent Communication Board.

Gang-free Zone

Minimum Standards 746.501(b)(2)

The Willow School is a child-care center, and any area within 1,000 feet of the center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty under the Texas Penal Code.

Zero Tolerance for Gang Activity

The Willow School maintains a zero-tolerance stance toward any form of gang-related activities, affiliations, or symbols on school property. This includes, but is not limited to, displaying gang signs, wearing gang-related attire, or engaging in behavior associated with gang culture.

Prohibition of Gang Apparel

Children, parents, staff, and visitors are prohibited from wearing clothing, accessories, or displaying symbols associated with gang affiliation. The school reserves the right to address and require removal of any clothing or items deemed inappropriate or potentially linked to gang culture.

Monitoring and Reporting

Staff members are trained to monitor for signs of gang-related activity. Any suspected or observed gang-related behavior or symbols must be reported immediately to administration.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement

The Willow School may collaborate with local law enforcement to stay informed about community safety concerns. Any incidents or concerns may be reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

Parent and Guardian Cooperation

Parents/guardians are expected to cooperate fully in maintaining a gang-free environment, including refraining from wearing gang-related attire and supporting the school's expectations with their child.

Confidential Reporting Mechanism

The Willow School provides a confidential reporting option for individuals who have concerns about possible gang-related activity, without fear of retaliation.

Preventing & Responding to Child Abuse & Neglect

Minimum Standards 746.501(25)

Staff Reporting

- All staff members are mandatory reporters and will report suspected abuse or neglect as required by law.
- Reports may be made confidentially to protect the safety and privacy of the child involved.
- The school will fully cooperate with investigating authorities.

Staff Training

1. Annual Training Requirement: All staff members are required to undergo annual training on recognizing and responding to child abuse and neglect. Training will cover identifying signs, reporting procedures, and the legal responsibilities of staff.
2. Continuous Education: Staff will receive ongoing education and updates related to child abuse prevention and intervention strategies. This may include workshops, seminars, and online resources.

Family Reporting

If a parent suspects that their child is a victim of abuse or neglect, they should immediately report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) through one of the following avenues:

Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 (24/7)

Website: www.txabusehotline.org

Follow Instructions:

- Follow any instructions provided by the hotline operator. They may ask additional questions to gather necessary details for investigation purposes.
- DFPS will investigate the report and take appropriate action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. The agency may offer services to the family, such as counseling or parenting classes, to help prevent future incidents of abuse or neglect.
- Parents can also seek assistance from local law enforcement and medical professionals, who are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to DFPS.
- It's important for parents to take action as soon as possible if they suspect their child is a victim of abuse or neglect, as early intervention can help prevent further harm and promote healing.

Increasing Awareness

1. Employee and Parent Awareness: Regular communication channels will be used to increase awareness among employees and parents regarding issues related to child abuse and neglect. This includes sharing information on warning signs, risk factors, and prevention techniques.
2. Informational Materials: Posters, pamphlets, and other informational materials will be displayed in visible areas within the center to educate both staff and parents about the signs of abuse, risk factors, and preventive measures.

Coordination with Community Organizations

1. Community Partnerships: The school will establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations that specialize in child protection. This may include collaborating with child advocacy centers, social services, and law enforcement.
2. Communication Channels: Please report any suspected abuse immediately. The school will fully cooperate with investigating authorities. <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP & COMMUNICATION

Parent Participation

Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(E)

The Willow School encourages families to be active partners in their child's education. **Parent participation may include:**

- Attending open house events, orientations, parent education workshops, and school meetings
- Participating in parent-teacher conferences
- Volunteering for school events and classroom support opportunities
- Providing feedback through surveys or communication with administration
- Supporting classroom routines and expectations at home

Volunteering

All volunteer opportunities are subject to school approval and may require background checks or additional documentation as required by licensing.

Parent Communication

Minimum Standards 746.501(6)

Brightwheel is The Willow School's official communication platform.

The Willow School is committed to keeping families informed of important updates, incidents, and concerns involving their child.

Types of Communication:

- Messages to administration and teachers
- Daily notes and updates
- Reminders and announcements
- Supply requests
- Incident reports
- Billing notifications and invoices

Professionalism & Privacy

- Families should not contact staff through personal phone numbers, texting, or social media
- Staff may not respond outside of business hours unless urgent
- Brightwheel is checked throughout the day, but staff may not respond immediately while supervising children

Communication Changes Policy

Any temporary or day-of changes to parent/guardian communication must be communicated to both administration and your child's teacher.

For example, if you will be unavailable during the day, you must notify administration and classroom staff and provide the name and contact information of the person who should be contacted instead.

Parent Notification Procedures

If a parent/guardian cannot be reached when immediate contact is needed, The Willow School will:

- Contact emergency contacts listed in the child's file
- Continue attempts to reach the parent/guardian
- Contact emergency services when needed for medical emergencies

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure emergency contact information remains current at all times. Parent/guardian phone numbers must be in Brightwheel.

Urgent Situations

If there is an urgent concern during the school day (Pick-up changes, illness pick-up, etc.), families should contact administration via phone or through Brightwheel immediately. In an emergency, administration will call the family.

Confidentiality Policy

Our program is committed to protecting the privacy and dignity of each child, family, and staff member. In keeping with Montessori principles of respect for the individual, all personal information is handled with care, discretion, and professionalism.

Because our work centers on children and their families, all information obtained through enrollment, observation, assessment, and daily interactions is kept strictly confidential.

Children's Records

- Children's assessments, observation records, and portfolios are stored securely in a locked classroom cabinet or secure administrative location.
- Records are available upon request to authorized teaching staff, administrators, the child's parent or legal guardian, and Child Care Licensing representatives.
- In the event of a licensing inspection or site visit, Child Care Licensing may review records to ensure compliance with Minimum Standards.

Release of Information

- Medical, developmental, assessment, and other personal child or family information will only be released to Child Care Licensing, consultants, therapists, schools, or other professionals with written parental/guardian consent.
- An exception applies in cases of suspected abuse or neglect, as staff are mandated by law to report concerns to the appropriate authorities.

Medical and Safety Information

- Information regarding severe allergies or other significant medical conditions may be posted discreetly within the classroom to ensure the child's safety. This will be accessible solely to staff and authorized volunteers.

Professional Conduct

- Staff will not discuss confidential child, family, or staff information in the presence of children, unauthorized individuals, or outside the workplace.
- All conversations regarding children will occur respectfully and privately, reflecting our commitment to maintaining each child's dignity and trust.

By upholding these standards, we foster a safe, respectful, and trusting partnership between home and school while maintaining compliance with Child Care Licensing regulations.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of Interest & Professional Boundaries

To maintain a safe, professional, and equitable environment, families are expected to respect appropriate boundaries with staff and other enrolled families.

Conflict of Interest

Parents/guardians may not engage in arrangements that create a conflict of interest with the School's operations. **This includes, but is not limited to:**

- Entering into private childcare or babysitting agreements with staff members without prior written approval from administration
- Offering gifts, financial incentives, or favors intended to influence classroom placement, treatment, or school decisions
- Conduct that could compromise a staff member's professional responsibilities

Staff Babysitting for School Families (Personal Arrangement)

From time to time, families may ask staff members to provide babysitting or childcare outside of school hours. While the School understands these relationships may develop and does not

prohibit staff from babysitting for current families, all babysitting arrangements are strictly personal and private. **If you plan to ask a staff member to babysit, please contact administration to schedule a time to meet and sign the Babysitting Policy before making arrangements.**

When a staff member babysits for a family:

- The staff member is not acting as a representative of the School
- The arrangement is not sponsored, supervised, or endorsed by the School
- The School is not responsible or liable for any private childcare arrangements made outside of working hours

Staff & Parent Communication Boundaries

Families may not use a staff member's personal phone number, social media, or personal contact information to inquire about or discuss matters related to a child's care during the school day, **including but not limited to:**

- classroom routines or decisions
- behavior concerns
- scheduling, attendance, or pickup changes
- school incidents or injuries
- messages intended for the child's teacher or administration
- requests for updates during school hours

All school-related communication must go through approved school channels (such as the official school email, staff email, or Brightwheel). We are also not privy to, nor responsible for, information shared outside of Brightwheel

Staff members are encouraged to maintain clear boundaries and may redirect families to contact the School directly for any school-related questions or concerns.

Relationships with Staff

Staff members are expected to maintain professional boundaries with families.

Parents/guardians may not:

- Attempt to develop relationships that interfere with a staff member's professional role
- Engage staff in matters unrelated to their role during working hours
- Communicate with staff through personal channels in a way that bypasses school procedures

Relationships with Other Families

Families are expected to interact respectfully and appropriately with other enrolled families. Behavior that creates division, spreads misinformation, or disrupts the school community may result in administrative action, including possible termination of enrollment.

The School reserves the right to determine when a conflict of interest or boundary violation has occurred.

CLOTHING & SUPPLIES

Minimum Standards 746.501

Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(E)

Required Supplies

To ensure children can participate safely and comfortably in daily activities, families must provide all required supplies as requested by the school. All supplies must be labeled. Parents should monitor Brightwheel messages for reminders and classroom needs.

The Willow School may require the parent/guardian to:

- Bring the missing items to the school promptly
- Pick up the child if the items cannot be provided in a timely manner.
- If a child arrives without required supplies that are necessary for health, safety, hygiene, or participation, staff have the right to refuse a child.

This policy helps ensure we can maintain proper supervision, hygiene, and classroom routines for all children.

Wipes & Hygiene

The Willow School provides wipes for cleaning children's hands and faces as needed throughout the day.

Parents are responsible for supplying wipes for diapering and toileting. Please ensure your child's wipes are clearly labeled and kept stocked.

If a parent prefers that their child not use the school-provided hand and face wipes, it is the parent's responsibility to notify staff in writing.

Please note: The use of wipes does not replace proper handwashing. Children and staff will continue to follow established handwashing procedures in accordance with health and safety guidelines.

Bags & Personal Items

Types of Bags Permitted

- Small bags that can fit into cubbies or be hung on hooks on the classroom walls
- Backpacks are **NOT** permitted
- Wet bags to send home wet clothes

Times to send bags

- Mondays to send nap supplies and folders

- Fridays to bring home nap supplies and folders
- Any time their children need to replace clothes

Personal Items

Families are asked not to send personal items with their child to school.

If personal items are brought to school, they will be placed in the child's cubby or stored in the office for safekeeping. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to take these items home.

The Willow School is not responsible for any personal items that are lost, damaged, or misplaced while at school.

Toys from Home

Toys from home are not permitted unless requested by the teacher.

Items brought from home may:

- Become lost or damaged
- Create conflict between children
- Distract from classroom routines and learning

If a comfort item is needed for rest or transition support, families should discuss this with the child's teacher or administration.

Classroom Materials

The Willow School provides all classroom materials and learning resources necessary for student instruction. These materials are funded through school resources, including the annual student supply fee.

Montessori materials are intentionally designed using high-quality, natural components and are often costly to repair or replace. Students are taught to handle all materials with care and respect.

Material Replacement

If a material is intentionally damaged or misused beyond normal wear and tear, administration may require the family to reimburse the cost of the item or provide a replacement.

We appreciate families partnering with us to help maintain the integrity and longevity of our classroom materials for all students.

Take-home Folders

Each Friday, staff will send home a take-home folder containing your child's work and artwork from the week.

Please review the contents and return the folder to school on Monday. Returning the folder promptly ensures that your child's hard work can continue to be sent home each week.

If a folder is lost or damaged, families will be asked to provide a replacement.

Clothing & Footwear

Recommended Clothing

Children must arrive at school dressed and ready for the day.

To support independence and safety, please arrive in:

- Comfortable shirts and pants/shorts
- Weather-appropriate layers
- Easy fasteners children can manage independently
- Clothing that can get messy (Paint, dirt, water play, food spills)

Not Recommended Clothing

To support independence and safety, please avoid:

- Clothing with difficult fasteners (hard buttons, complicated belts) or onesies in toddler & primary
- Accessories that may interfere with play (Dangly jewelry, large hair accessories)
- Shoes that are unsafe for running/climbing

Indoor & Outdoor Shoe Policy

All children are required to have both labeled **indoor shoes and outdoor shoes** at school.

- Indoor shoes must be kept at school and worn inside the classroom.
- Outdoor shoes will be worn during outdoor play.

This policy helps prevent the spread of dirt, debris, and germs throughout the classroom environment and supports a clean, healthy learning space for all children.

Children must wear:

- Closed-toe shoes
- Shoes safe for outdoor play

- Shoes that fit securely

Crocs are permitted as indoor shoes only. For outdoor play, children must wear secure shoes that support safe running and climbing. Crocs may not be worn outside unless the back strap is worn properly. Flip flops are not permitted.

Clothing Replacement Requirement

Infant and toddler students are required to have 5 pairs of clothing at the school. Primary students who are fully toilet trained only require 3 pairs of clothes. If clothing is sent home (soiled or changed for comfort), parents must send back the exact amount of replacement clothing the next school day. Primary parents are asked to put their child's replacement clothing directly into their clothing boxes that are located in the hallway cabinets.

Replacement example:

If 2 shirts and 1 pair of pants are sent home, the child must return with 2 shirts and 1 pair of pants the next day. This helps ensure children always have appropriate backup clothing available.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE EXPECTATIONS

Parking Lot & Vehicle Safety

For the safety of all children and families, parents/guardians must supervise children at all times in the parking lot and near vehicles.

Parents/guardians must:

- Hold their child's hand or keep them close while walking to and from the building
- Not allow children to run ahead in the parking lot
- Never leave children unattended in a vehicle
- Follow all posted traffic and parking procedures

Doors and Gates Policy

For the safety and security of all students, children are not permitted to open, close, or operate any doors or gates on school property at any time. Children are taught by staff that gates and doors are for adults only. Please do not allow your child to input the door code.

Primary Classroom Door

For the safety and security of all students, the Primary classroom door will remain closed at all times.

The door is equipped with an alarm system that alerts staff immediately if it is opened, ensuring that children remain safely supervised within the classroom environment.

Student safety is our highest priority, and these procedures are in place to provide an added layer of protection.

Cell Phones During Arrival and Departure

Parents are encouraged to refrain from talking on cell phones during drop-off and pick-up.

Arrival and departure are important moments for children to:

- Connect with caregivers
- Transition calmly
- Feel secure and emotionally supported

We ask families to make arrival and departure a focused, present, one-to-one moment with their child whenever possible.

Check-In / Check-Out iPads

School iPads used for check-in/out are for parent/guardian use only. Please do not allow children to touch or use the iPads.

Arrival Times

The Willow School opens at 7:00 a.m. Children may arrive beginning at this time.

To support a calm classroom environment and uninterrupted Montessori work cycles:

- Toddler & Primary students must arrive no later than 8:30 a.m. The gate will be locked at 8:30 a.m. Parents may enter the building through the door at the top of the ramp. Please ring the doorbell, as knocking can be difficult to hear. If no one answers, please either message in Brightwheel or call the school.
- Toddler & Primary students may arrive by 11:00 a.m. with a doctor's note following an appointment.
- Late arrivals may disrupt the classroom and are discouraged.

Toddler & Primary Classroom Drop-Off Expectations

- Children who are physically able to walk are expected to walk into the building independently. Encouraging independence is an important part of the Montessori philosophy and helps set a confident tone for the day.
- Walk with their child into the building (Unless otherwise directed by staff.)
- Change shoes- Toddler and Primary students are required to change from their outdoor shoes into their designated indoor shoes upon arrival. This helps maintain a clean classroom environment and supports our daily routines. If a child is not yet able to change shoes independently, we ask that parents assist them during drop-off.
- If toilet trained or training, parents must assist their child in using the restroom before entering the classroom.
- Check their child in on Brightwheel. **Please do not allow children to touch the tablet.**
- Students should carry their own personal belongings and school supplies into the classroom. Primary students, in particular, are expected to manage and carry their own items upon arrival.

If a child needs assistance putting supplies away (for example, if they need to make multiple trips), parents are asked to wait:

- **Toddler:** To the right of the classroom doorway
- **Primary:** Outside the classroom door
- Ensure the child is safely transitioned to a staff member before leaving the building. The adult must make direct contact with a teacher upon arrival and notify a teacher when departing with the child.
- Say goodbye clearly and confidently.

- Avoid prolonged goodbyes that may increase separation difficulty.

If you anticipate needing assistance during drop-off or pick-up, please contact your child's teacher in advance so a plan can be arranged.

Infant Drop-off

- The Infant classroom is a **no-shoes environment** to maintain cleanliness and provide a safe space for our youngest learners. Parents must either remove their shoes or wear shoe covers when entering the classroom. Shoe covers are provided by the school and are located in a basket outside the classroom door.
- If supplies such as diapers or wipes are brought in, staff will restock them accordingly.
- Parents are welcome to enter the Infant classroom during drop-off. Upon arrival, staff will unpack your child's bag and properly store milk and any food items.
- A brief and efficient drop-off is always appreciated, as it helps maintain a calm environment for all infants.

Classroom Pick-Up Expectations

Children may be picked up between 2:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. If picking up prior, parents/guardians must go through administration to not disrupt naptime.

Parents/guardians must:

- Check their child out using Brightwheel. **Please do not allow children to touch the tablet.**
- Allow their child to gather their belongings and greet the parent at the door. While we have an open-door-policy, we do encourage families to meet their children at the door as to not disrupt the children and the classroom.
- Supervise their child at all times during pick-up.
- Make direct contact with a teacher upon arrival and notify a teacher when departing with the child.
- Exit school property promptly after pick-up.
- Not leave the property or exit through the gate without their child.

Release of Children / Authorized Pick-Up

Minimum Standards 746.4101. and 746.4103

Children will only be released to individuals authorized in school records.

- Changes must be submitted in writing by the parent/guardian through
- Send a message through Brightwheel to authorize someone not on the pick-up list
- Individuals will be asked to present photo ID

- The school follows valid custody documentation on file

Under no circumstances will a child be released to an unauthorized individual. If an authorized person is unfamiliar to staff, they must check in at the office and present a valid photo ID. A signature is required in Brightwheel at the time of pick-up.

Separation and Adjustment

New experiences and transitions may cause children to experience separation anxiety when a parent or caregiver leaves school. These emotional responses are common in young children. Our teachers and Director are experienced in supporting children through the adjustment process and will provide comfort, reassurance, and guidance as needed.

The following strategies can help support a smooth transition:

- Talk positively about school. Have conversations about teachers, classmates, and daily activities. Preparing your child for what to expect helps reduce anxiety. Children, like adults, are more comfortable when they know what is coming.
- Allow plenty of time for arrival. A relaxed, unrushed drop-off helps your child begin the day feeling calm and secure.
- Maintain a calm, confident demeanor. Bring your child into the classroom in a matter-of-fact and positive manner. Children often respond to their parent's emotions.
- Offer reassurance. Let your child know you will return and describe the time in terms they understand, such as "after nap" or "after snack."
- Say goodbye clearly and confidently. A loving goodbye followed by a prompt departure is often best. Linger or leaving without saying goodbye can increase anxiety and confusion.

Teachers will comfort your child and help engage them in classroom activities. Families are welcome to message through Brightwheel or call the school to check on their child's adjustment.

Separation anxiety may last for a few days or several weeks. In some cases, it may begin after a child has already been attending school for some time. With consistency, reassurance, and support from both home and school, children gradually become comfortable and confident in their new environment.

Parent Rights & Access

Texas Minimum Standards 746.501(20)

Parents have the right to:

- Enter and examine the center during operating hours without advance notice
- File a complaint against the center
- Review the center's publicly accessible records
- Review the center's written records concerning their child (per §746.601)
- Receive from the center:
 - HHSC inspection reports

- Information on how to access the center’s compliance history online
- Have the center comply with a valid, judge-signed court order preventing another parent from visiting or removing the child (per §746.4101)
- Be provided with Child Care Regulation contact information (department name, address, and telephone number)
- View video recordings of an alleged abuse or neglect incident involving their child, if:
 - The recording is available
 - The parent does not retain any portion showing other children
 - The center provides written notice to parents of any other children shown before inspection
- The center provides written notice to parents of any other children shown before inspection
- Review, upon request:
 - Staff training records
 - In-house training curriculum (if applicable)
- Be free from retaliation by the center for exercising any of these rights

Custody, Court Orders, and Unplanned Custody Issues

The Willow School will follow valid legal documentation on file, including custody orders, restraining orders, and protective orders.

To ensure child safety and compliance:

- Families must provide the school with a certified copy of the most recent court order and any amendments
- The Willow School will follow the court order exactly as written
- In the absence of a court order on file, the school must treat both parents as having equal access as required by law

If a custody dispute arises on campus, staff will prioritize child safety and may contact local authorities if needed.

Transportation

The Willow School does not provide transportation at this time. Families are responsible for drop-off and pick-up.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

The Willow School uses mixed-age Montessori classrooms to support independence, community, and individualized learning.

Infant Classroom (6 Weeks – 15 Months)

In a Montessori infant classroom, children ages **six weeks to 15 months** are provided with a safe, nurturing environment that supports development in all areas. The classroom is designed to meet the unique needs of infants, with low shelves and furniture that allow children to move and explore freely.

The infant environment includes:

- Age-appropriate materials that encourage exploration and stimulate the senses
- Opportunities for movement and early motor development (Rolling, crawling, standing, walking)
- Language exposure through responsive interaction, songs, and conversation
- Social-emotional development through secure routines and consistent caregiving

The classroom is staffed by educators who understand infant development and provide gentle guidance and support. Teachers work closely with families to ensure each infant's individual needs are met. Infants are encouraged to build independence and self-confidence through exploration and discovery in a supportive, caring setting.

Toddler Classroom (15 – 33 Months)

In a Montessori toddler classroom, children ages **15 months to 33 months** are provided with a safe and stimulating environment that supports natural curiosity and a growing desire for independence. The classroom is designed to meet the unique needs of toddlers and includes hands-on Montessori materials that support fine and gross motor development.

Toddlers participate in activities that support development such as:

- Pouring
- Sorting
- Building
- Practical life routines that build independence and confidence

The classroom is staffed by trained educators who provide gentle guidance and consistent support. Teachers work closely with families to ensure each toddler's needs are met. Children learn to communicate their needs, respect others, and work collaboratively with peers. The Montessori toddler program builds a strong foundation for future learning and development.

Primary Classroom (34 Months – 6 Years)

In a Montessori primary classroom, children ages **34 months to 6 years** are provided with a rich and engaging learning environment that supports curiosity and a love of learning. The classroom includes child-sized furniture and carefully selected materials designed for hands-on learning and exploration.

Transitioning Between Classrooms

At The Willow School, classroom transitions are thoughtfully planned to support each child's emotional well-being, confidence, and success. Transitions may occur based on age, developmental readiness, classroom availability, and the child's overall needs.

Collaborative Planning

Transitions begin with a conversation between the child's current lead teacher(s) and administration. Together, the team will review the child's readiness, developmental needs, and the best timing for a transition.

Observation by the Receiving Lead Teacher

The lead teacher of the classroom the child will be transitioning into will observe the child to better understand the child's temperament, routines, independence skills, and social-emotional readiness.

Gradual and Supported Transition

Most transitions will occur gradually. Children may begin by spending short portions of the day in the new classroom, increasing time over several days or weeks until they are fully transitioned into full days in the new environment.

Consistent Communication with Families

Families will be informed throughout the transition process. Parents/guardians can expect consistent communication from teachers and/or administration regarding the transition plan, progress, and any support needed at home or school.

Our goal is for each child to feel safe, confident, and welcomed as they move into their next stage of development within our Montessori community.

Toileting Policy (Toddler Classroom)

At The Willow School, toileting is a collaborative process between families and school staff.

Before a child begins toileting in the toddler classroom, a formal meeting will be scheduled with administration, the Lead Toddler Teacher, and the child's guardians. During this meeting, we will review readiness signs, classroom procedures, expectations, and consistency strategies to ensure a successful transition. Families must provide required toileting supplies. Please refer to the Toddler Supply List for approved training underwear and additional items needed.

Successful toileting requires strong coordination between home and school. Consistency and communication are essential. Families are expected to follow the agreed-upon plan at home to support progress in the classroom. Teachers will provide regular updates on your child's progress. Ongoing communication between family and staff is key to a positive and supportive toileting experience.

***Toddlers must be fully toilet trained before they can move to the primary classroom. Accidents are expected, but primary staff do not change diapers or pull-ups.**

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSMENTS

Curriculum Overview

The Willow School is a member of the American Montessori Society. The Willow School uses the Montessori method, fostering independent learning and hands-on experiences. We provide a comprehensive Montessori curriculum that empowers children to develop their full potential. Our curriculum includes practical life exercises, sensorial activities, language and math materials, cultural studies, a STEM program, and outdoor exploration. Staff members have access to a range of resources and tools to aid in curriculum development, including access to educational materials through the American Montessori Society, guidance from experienced educators, and opportunities for professional development. A well-planned curriculum is essential for meeting the unique needs of each student and promoting their overall development.

We aim to provide individualized learning experiences that align with Montessori principles and educational standards. The following are links to offer an explanation of each resource and/or curriculum.

The Willow School Montessori curriculum includes:

- [Practical Life](#)
- [Sensorial](#)
- Language
 - [Waseca](#)
 - [Guided reading](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Cultural Studies](#)
- STEM and outdoor exploration

Children are supported through individualized lessons, purposeful work, and hands-on learning experiences.

Kindergarten Curriculum

At The Willow School, our Kindergarten program is rooted in authentic Montessori philosophy and practice. We are deeply committed to the Montessori method and its emphasis on independence, hands-on learning, critical thinking, and whole-child development. At the same time, we recognize that many of our students transition to public or private schools after Kindergarten. For this reason, we intentionally align our Montessori instruction with the [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\) standards](#).

This alignment does not replace or diminish Montessori learning. Instead, it enhances it. By thoughtfully connecting Montessori materials and lessons to TEKS objectives, we ensure that students develop both a deep conceptual understanding and the academic vocabulary and skill sets needed for a smooth and successful transition beyond The Willow School.

Language Enrichment

At The Willow School, we believe that early exposure to multiple languages supports cognitive development, cultural awareness, and communication skills. We value creating a learning environment that reflects diversity and broadens children's understanding of the world around them.

We provide exposure to the following languages:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Spanish
- French

Language offerings may vary by classroom based on curriculum planning, age group, and teacher-led instruction.

Our goal is to introduce children to new sounds, vocabulary, and cultural experiences in a fun and developmentally appropriate way.

Enrichment Programs

At The Willow School, we believe enrichment programs enhance children's development and provide valuable learning experiences beyond the classroom. We also understand how challenging it can be for families to coordinate after-school activities, which is why we are proud to offer on-site enrichment opportunities.

Current Enrichment Offerings

- Karate (Brick City Martial Arts)
- Soccer Shots

Please note:

- The Willow School does not collect or process payments for enrichment programs.
- All enrollment, communication, and payments are handled directly between families and the enrichment provider.
- Enrichment schedules, availability, and participation details are determined by the individual providers.

We are committed to partnering with quality enrichment organizations that support children's physical development, confidence, coordination, and overall well-being.

Assessments

Assessing the progress and development of our students is an integral part of our educational approach at The Willow School. A thorough understanding of each child's abilities, strengths, and areas for growth allows us to tailor instruction and support individual learning needs. Assessments are conducted in a respectful, supportive manner and are used to guide curriculum planning and meaningful communication with families.

Developmental Assessments

Developmental assessments focus on understanding the whole child and monitoring growth over time. These assessments include:

- Ongoing teacher observations documented in Brightwheel
- The [Early Childhood Direction Center Developmental Checklist](#)

These tools help teachers track developmental milestones, identify strengths, and recognize areas where additional support may be needed.

Assessment Schedule

Developmental assessments occur at the following times throughout the school year:

Infant

- Twice per year (and additionally as needed)
- Prior to transitioning from the Infant classroom to the Toddler classroom

Toddler

- Fall
- Spring
- Prior to transitioning from the Toddler classroom to the Primary classroom

Primary

- When a new student enrolls in the Primary classroom
- Fall
- Spring

Our staff is committed to using assessment results thoughtfully and responsibly to support each child's growth and development while maintaining a positive, stress-free experience for students and families.

Academic Assessments

Academic assessments focus on early learning skills and instructional progress. At The Willow School, we utilize CLI Engage assessments. CLI Engage is a Texas Education Agency-supported early childhood assessment system developed and maintained in partnership with The University of Texas at Austin. It is grounded in extensive research in early childhood education and is designed specifically for young learners. The assessments are administered by the director.

CLI Engage assessments focus on monitoring student progress and informing instruction rather than testing or grading students. They provide educators with meaningful data to support individualized learning and classroom planning.

These assessments focus on key areas of learning, including:

- Language and literacy development
- Early math skills
- Science

CLI Engage assessment results help teachers understand each child's academic progress and plan instruction that meets individual and classroom needs. PK4 students will be assessed at the end of their PK4 year, and results will be shared through Brightwheel. Kindergarten students will be assessed in the fall and the spring and shared with families during parent-teacher conferences.

Hearing & Vision Screening Requirement

Families must complete annual hearing and vision screenings for children who are 4 years old on or before September 1 of the current school year, and every year after.

- Parents must ensure screenings occur at the child's well-child appointment
- Screening results must be submitted directly to The Willow School and kept in the child's file
- Results must be submitted by deadlines provided by administration
- Failure to submit may result in the child not being permitted to return until documentation is received and approved

MONTESSORI DOMAINS

Montessori Practical Life

The Practical Life area provides real-life activities that promote independence, concentration, and coordination. Children engage in activities such as:

- Pouring
- Sweeping
- Setting a table

These activities support motor development while also encouraging order, responsibility, and respect for the environment.

Sensorial

The Sensorial area supports the development of the senses, including touch, smell, taste, and sound. Children engage in activities such as:

- Matching colors
- Grading sizes
- Identifying smells

These lessons strengthen visual and auditory discrimination and help children classify and organize their environment.

Mathematics

The Mathematics area supports early mathematical understanding through hands-on materials and exploration. Children engage in activities such as:

- Counting
- Sorting
- Measuring
- Working with the decimal system

These lessons build a strong foundation for logical thinking and abstract reasoning.

Language

The Language area supports reading, writing, and communication development. Children engage in activities such as:

- Phonetic lessons

- Word building
- Sentence analysis

These lessons support vocabulary growth, grammar development, and reading comprehension.

Cultural Studies

The Cultural Studies area supports a child's understanding of the world and the interconnectedness of living things. Children engage in studies such as:

- Geography
- Botany
- Zoology

These lessons build respect for the natural world and appreciation for cultural diversity.

Celebration of Life

In Montessori classrooms, birthdays are honored through a meaningful tradition called a Celebration of Life. Rather than focusing on parties, treats, or large celebrations, this experience helps children understand the passage of time and recognize their growth in a calm, respectful way.

A Celebration of Life supports children in:

- Understanding the concept of a year and the seasons
- Reflecting on personal growth and development
- Building a sense of community and belonging
- Practicing gratitude and respect for one another

This tradition aligns with Montessori values by honoring the child with simplicity, beauty, and intention.

How it Works:

During the Celebration of Life, the child participates in a short ceremony that may include:

- Walking around a representation of the sun while holding a globe to show how the Earth moves through a year
- Sharing a few special memories or milestones from each year of the child's life
- Singing a simple birthday song and offering kind words

The child takes one walk around the "sun" for each year they have lived, symbolizing the completion of another trip around the sun.

Family Participation

Families may be invited to contribute in simple ways, such as:

- Providing a few photos (one from each year of life) for the teacher to share
- Sharing a short written note about meaningful milestones

- Providing a healthy snack for the class.
- Gifting a book to the classroom from the child (a list of suggested titles will be provided by the Lead Teacher)

To maintain consistency and classroom routines, teachers will guide the format and timing of each celebration.

Cultural Celebrations

At The Willow School, cultural celebrations are an important part of our Montessori philosophy and curriculum. Dr. Maria Montessori believed that education should foster respect, understanding, and appreciation for all people. A core principle of the Montessori method is helping children develop a sense of global awareness and learn that they are part of a diverse and interconnected world.

Cultural celebrations provide meaningful opportunities for children to explore traditions, history, music, art, food, and customs from around the world. These experiences promote respect, curiosity, and empathy while helping children build a strong foundation of cultural understanding.

We make every effort to celebrate and honor a wide range of cultures and traditions throughout the year. Examples of cultural celebrations may include Holi, Día de los Muertos, Lunar New Year, and many others that reflect the diversity of our school community and the world around us.

Our goal is to present these celebrations in an age-appropriate, respectful, and educational manner that aligns with Montessori principles and supports the development of globally minded learners.

Respecting All Families

If you prefer that your child not participate in a particular celebration, you must notify the administration in advance. Please note that we do not have additional staffing available to provide separate supervision during celebration activities. If your child will not participate, they will need to remain at home on the day of the celebration.

STEM & Outdoor Exploration

The Willow School also incorporates STEM learning and outdoor exploration to support curiosity, problem-solving, and real-world discovery.

Children may engage in experiences such as:

- Nature observation and exploration
- Gardening and seasonal studies
- Simple science experiments and inquiry-based learning
- Building and engineering challenges using age-appropriate materials
- Outdoor gross motor development and movement activities

These experiences help children strengthen critical thinking skills, build resilience, and develop a deeper connection to the natural world.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & OUTDOOR PLAY

Minimum Standards 746.501(18)(A-D, F&G)

The Willow School promotes daily indoor and outdoor physical activity in alignment with Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and developmentally appropriate practices.

Benefits, Types, & Settings of Physical Activity and Outdoor Play

Physical activity supports children's:

- Gross motor development
- Coordination and balance
- Social skills and cooperative play
- Emotional regulation and stress reduction
- Overall health and wellness

Children participate in both structured and unstructured activities, including:

- Structured activities (Teacher-led movement games, music and movement, guided gross motor activities)
- Unstructured activities (Free play outdoors, climbing, running, imaginative movement, open-ended physical play)

Physical activity may take place in the following settings:

- Outdoor playground areas
- Outdoor classroom spaces (As applicable)
- Indoor classroom movement areas
- Indoor open spaces designated for movement activities

Duration of Physical Activity

Children are provided opportunities for physical activity each day, including:

- Outdoor physical activity (Weather permitting)
- Indoor physical activity opportunities when outdoor play is limited

The Willow School provides physical activity opportunities throughout the day based on age, developmental needs, and classroom schedule.

Extreme Weather Conditions

Outdoor play may be limited or restricted when extreme weather poses a health risk, including:

- Extreme heat or unsafe heat index
- Severe cold temperatures
- Lightning or thunderstorms
- Heavy rain
- Poor air quality

- Other hazardous conditions as determined by administration

Administration will make the final decision regarding outdoor play based on safety.

Plan for Physical Activity When Outdoor Play Is Limited

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports outdoor play even in extremely cold weather. We believe that the playground is probably the safest place to be in the winter, as staying indoors in close contact with others encourages the spread of germs and limits exposure to fresh air and exercise. **If your child is too ill to go outside, please make other arrangements for your child.** Some options are to come over to stay with your child during outdoor time or keeping your child home.

When outdoor play is restricted, children will still participate in physical activity indoors through:

- Movement games
- Dance and music activities
- Stretching and yoga-based movement
- Gross motor stations and safe indoor movement routines

Water Play Safety

Water play is a fun and developmentally appropriate activity when done safely and with close supervision.

The Willow School may provide water play activities such as:

- Water tables
- Sprinklers

For safety, pools are not used.

Water Play Expectations

- Children are actively supervised at all times
- Water tables and water materials are used in a controlled and safe manner
- Water is drained and equipment is cleaned after use
- Children are provided appropriate clothing changes as needed

Splash Days

During the summer months, The Willow School hosts Splash Day on Fridays in June and July.

On Splash Day, families should send children with:

- Swimwear (arrive to school dressed in swimwear)
- Appropriate water shoes
- Towel
- A change of clothes

Playground Maintenance

The Willow School playground is inspected daily to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. Inspections include checking equipment for proper maintenance, removing trash and debris, and identifying any potential safety hazards that may pose a risk.

Any concerns identified during inspection are addressed promptly to maintain a safe play environment.

GUIDANCE, BEHAVIOR SUPPORT, & DISENROLLMENT POLICY

(Minimum Standards 746.2803)

Guiding Principles

The Montessori approach to discipline and guidance is rooted in respect for the child as an individual and the belief that each child possesses an intrinsic motivation to learn and develop. The goal of discipline at The Willow School is to nurture the child's sense of self-discipline, independence, and responsibility while fostering a positive and respectful learning environment.

At the Willow School we believe in:

- **Respect for the Child:** Staff members treat each child with respect, acknowledging their unique qualities, needs, and abilities. Staff receive ongoing training in positive discipline techniques and guidance to stay informed about best practices.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement is emphasized by recognizing and praising desirable behaviors to encourage their repetition.
- **Modeling Behavior:** Staff serve as role models, demonstrating the values and behaviors expected within the Montessori environment.
- **Clear Expectations:** Clear and age-appropriate expectations for behavior are communicated to children so they understand boundaries and guidelines.
- **Redirection:** When inappropriate behavior is observed, staff use redirection to guide the child toward a more suitable activity or behavior.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Children are encouraged to express their feelings and resolve conflicts through positive communication. Staff facilitate discussions and help children find peaceful resolutions.
- **Choice and Autonomy:** Children are provided choices and opportunities for autonomy within acceptable limits.
- **Natural Consequences:** Whenever possible, natural consequences are allowed to occur so children can learn from their actions in a supportive environment.
- **Consistent Limits:** Consistent limits are set to create a secure and predictable environment.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Expectations:** Behavior expectations are developmentally appropriate and consider individual needs and stages of development.
- **Gentle Guidance:** Gentle guidance is used rather than punitive measures. Staff use a calm and composed approach.

The Willow School does not use:

- Physical punishment
- Harsh discipline
- Humiliation, shaming, or threats
- Withholding food, rest, or bathroom access as punishment

Prepared Environment

The classroom will be organized to promote independence, order, and accessibility. Materials will be arranged logically and within reach of the children.

Freedom Within Limits

Children will be provided with choices in their activities within clear and consistent boundaries to encourage autonomy while ensuring a structured environment.

Behavior Communication with Parents

The Willow School values open communication with parents. Staff communicate regularly about behavior, achievements, and concerns through Brightwheel. If persistent behavioral challenges occur, staff and parents will work together to address underlying factors and create consistency between home and school.

Emergency Situations

In rare instances where a child's behavior poses an immediate threat to their safety or the safety of others, staff are authorized to intervene in a manner that ensures the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

Challenging Behavior Policy

Purpose

To create a supportive and respectful environment that promotes positive behavior and addresses challenging behaviors in a manner consistent with Montessori principles. Policy

Statement

The Willow School is committed to fostering a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment. We believe that understanding and addressing challenging behaviors is essential to the holistic development of each child. Our approach emphasizes observation, individualized support, and positive reinforcement within a prepared environment.

Challenging behaviors can include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- Repeated physical aggression to peers or staff (hitting, biting, scratching, etc.)
- Repeated relational aggression to peers or staff (verbal bullying, discouraging language, etc.)
- Excessive tantrums
- Self-injurious behaviors (head banging, intentional scratching, etc.)
- Refusal to follow directions or classroom expectations
- Intentionally destroying classroom property

Intervention Plan

If a child's behavior becomes unsafe or significantly disrupts the learning environment, administration may require:

1. Detailed Observation: Educators will observe children regularly to identify triggers, patterns, and contexts of challenging behaviors. All observations will be documented meticulously, including the time, place, and specific circumstances of the behavior. Observations will be entered into Brightwheel for record keeping and to notify the parent(s)/guardian immediately of any incidents related to behavior.

2. Parent Observations: The Willow School may invite a parent or guardian to observe their child in the classroom setting. This step is used when ongoing behavioral concerns persist despite initial guidance strategies and communication. The purpose of parent observation is to promote transparency, collaboration, and shared understanding between families and staff. During the observation, parents are asked to remain neutral observers and not interact with their child or other students, allowing staff to maintain the normal classroom routine.

3. Parent Meeting: Following the observation, a conference will be scheduled to discuss observations, identify potential triggers or patterns, and collaboratively determine next steps or additional support strategies that best serve the child's developmental and emotional needs.

4. Personalized Intervention: Based on observations, educators will develop and implement tailored strategies to support each child's specific needs and address challenging behaviors effectively using Montessori Principles. If your child is displaying challenging behavior, our staff will work as a team with family members to develop, if possible, and implement an individualized behavior plan that supports the child's inclusion and success within our program. The behavior plan must be feasible within the guidelines of Montessori Principles.

5. Continued Communication Between Home & School: Efforts will be made to ensure consistency between the approaches used at the center and those at home, fostering a coherent support system for the child

Biting Policy

Biting may occur in early childhood development, especially in toddler years.

When a biting incident occurs, staff will:

- Respond immediately to ensure safety
- Provide care and comfort to the child who was bitten
- Guide the child who bit using clear boundaries and redirection
- Document the incident and notify families
- Increase supervision and implement prevention strategies

Confidentiality

Updated February 2026

The Willow School maintains confidentiality. Names of other children involved will not be shared.

Repeated Biting

If biting becomes repeated, administration may:

- Meet with the family
- Develop a written support plan
- Require additional strategies for safety and supervision

Disenrollment

If all efforts have been attempted to mitigate the challenging behavior and none have deemed successful, withdrawal or suspension may be considered. In extreme cases, immediate termination from the program may be issued without notice. If your child presents a danger to themselves or others or causes severe injury, we may require immediate termination, in which your child may not return to care. The Willow School reserves the right to make final enrollment decisions based on safety and the needs of the classroom community. No tuition will be refunded.

Grounds for Suspension and/or disenrollment:

- Safety concerns
- Serious policy violations
- Failure to meet immunization requirements
- Non-payment of fees
- Failure to submit required documentation

Administration will communicate with families when concerns arise and may require conferences or support plans prior to suspension or disenrollment when appropriate.

Immediate Termination Due to Parent/Guardian Conduct

The School expects respectful and cooperative communication from all parents and guardians. Behavior that interferes with the safe, respectful, and professional operation of the school may result in immediate disenrollment.

Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Disrespectful, aggressive, or threatening conduct
- Harassment of staff, children, or other families
- Refusal to follow established school policies
- Actions that compromise the safety or well-being of the school community

The School reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, when such behavior warrants immediate termination of enrollment.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Minimum Standards 746.3601- 746.3611

The Willow School follows Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and maintains safety practices to protect children, families, and staff.

Classroom Safety practices

- Active supervision at all times
- Staff training in health and safety procedures
- Emergency preparedness and required drills
- Secure entry procedures and controlled access
- Consistent cleaning and sanitizing routines

Supervision, Ratios, and Safety

The safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority. We follow Child Care Licensing (CCR) Minimum Standards for teacher-to-child ratios and group sizes. When appropriate, additional staff support may be provided to ensure proper supervision and a calm, well-functioning environment.

Staff maintain active supervision while allowing children the freedom to explore and work independently within clearly established classroom limits.

Security Cameras and Classroom Monitoring

For the safety and security of our students and staff, The Willow School maintains security cameras on the exterior of the building. These cameras are used to monitor the perimeter of the property and may be reviewed in the event of an incident.

We do not have cameras inside classrooms. Classrooms are actively monitored by administration throughout the day to ensure compliance with state childcare licensing standards and to maintain a safe, high-quality learning environment.

In accordance with childcare licensing regulations, parents are permitted to have access to their child at any time while in care. To support transparency while maintaining classroom focus and student safety, the infant and primary classrooms are equipped with two-way observation glass. This allows parents to view their child's classroom without disrupting the learning environment. Children inside the classroom cannot see out through the glass.

All monitoring practices follow state childcare licensing guidelines regarding supervision, safety, and confidentiality.

Photography and Video Policy

The Children's Center uses the Brightwheel platform as the primary method for sharing photographs and videos of children with their families. Brightwheel provides a secure and private way for families to view classroom activities and daily experiences.

The school may also use its website and official social media accounts to communicate program events, classroom activities, and family involvement opportunities. However, children's faces will not be displayed on public platforms, including the school's website, social media pages, or promotional materials.

Photographs and videos will only be taken and shared in accordance with written parental authorization on file. This includes any materials used for school communications or fundraising purposes.

Teachers may create QR codes or other secure methods to share classroom highlights with families. In documenting classroom activities, teachers may photograph or record all children in their care. Any content shared outside of Brightwheel will not include identifiable images of children's faces.

Families and staff are encouraged to respect the privacy of others by refraining from posting photos or videos of children other than their own on social media or personal or professional websites.

Please note that the Children's Center is not responsible or liable for photographs or videos taken or shared by other families.

Animals in the Classroom

Children enjoy learning about animals, and from time to time, pets may be invited to visit the classroom as part of the educational program. This policy applies to classroom pets and visiting animals and does not pertain to service animals.

All pet visits must be discussed and approved by school staff in advance. Parents of children in the class will be notified prior to any scheduled animal visit.

The school follows the Texas Health and Safety Code regarding animals on the premises to ensure that visiting animals are in good health and properly vaccinated when required. Small rodents, such as guinea pigs, hamsters, and mice, are not required to be vaccinated under state guidelines.

Teachers will closely supervise all interactions between children and animals. Staff will provide guidance on safe and appropriate animal handling to prevent unsafe or unhealthy practices.

If a child has a known allergy to a specific type of animal, staff will ensure that the child is not exposed to that animal.

Staffing and Professional Standards

All staff are required to:

- Have criminal background checks and FBI fingerprinting
- Participate in drug testing (as applicable)
- Maintain Pediatric CPR and First Aid certification
- Maintain training in emergency preparedness and response procedures

Montessori Educators and Professional Growth

Our classrooms are guided by educators with a variety of educational backgrounds, credentials, and professional experiences. Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, and Aides work collaboratively to support the needs of the children and the classroom community. Many of our educators hold Montessori training appropriate to the age level they serve, and our program values ongoing development in Montessori philosophy and practice.

In a Montessori environment, the adult serves as a guide and observer, thoughtfully preparing the environment and supporting each child's individual development. Our educators are trained to:

- Observe children carefully to understand developmental readiness and interests
- Present materials intentionally and individually
- Foster independence, responsibility, and confidence
- Support concentration and purposeful work
- Model respectful communication and peaceful problem-solving

Our program maintains membership with the American Montessori Society (AMS). Through this membership and ongoing professional development, staff receive continued training, field updates, and current research in Montessori education and child development.

Staff participate in continuing education throughout the year, including training in child development, Montessori methodology, classroom observation and documentation, inclusive practices, and health and safety procedures.

In accordance with Child Care Licensing regulations, parents have the right to request documentation of staff training and qualifications.

Continuity of Care and Classroom Community

Montessori classrooms function as consistent, collaborative communities. Stable and trusting relationships are essential to children's sense of security and belonging.

Every effort is made to maintain continuity between teaching staff and children throughout the school year. Each classroom is staffed with a Lead Teacher, Assistant Teacher, and Aides who work together to guide the classroom community.

The teaching team collaborates to prepare and maintain the environment, present lessons, provide appropriate supervision, and respond to individual needs. Each child is known, supported, and respected as a valued member of the classroom.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Minimum Standards 746.3601- 746.3611

To support a healthy school environment, staff are encouraged to maintain current recommended immunizations and health practices. While vaccinations are encouraged to promote community well-being, they are not required unless mandated by public health regulations or Child Care Licensing standards.

Illness Exclusion

A child will be excluded from care if:

- An illness prevents comfortable participation in child-care activities, including outdoor play
- The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of other children in care
- The child was sent home with a fever.
- A temperature of 100 (please see [Temperature Screening](#) for more details)
- The child shows symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation indicating the child is no longer contagious •Children with an active case of head lice will be excluded until they have been treated and are free of live lice. The school will follow specific head lice protocols for treatment and re-entry.

Communicable Illness

The Willow School follows communicable disease exclusions required for schools as defined by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

Underimmunized Children

Any child who may be under-immunized (when medically necessary) will immediately be excluded from the group of children if a vaccine-preventable illness occurs in the school. Parents will be called to pick up their child immediately to prevent the child from becoming ill. Children will be allowed to return once the illness has been contained.

Communicable Illness Exposure Notifications

When children are exposed to a contagious illness, staff will inform parents:

- Verbally when appropriate

- Through Brightwheel
- With written notices posted in the affected classroom

Notices may include:

- Signs and symptoms
- Mode of transmission
- Period of communicability
- Control measures

Families must report contagious illness to the school immediately after diagnosis so appropriate notifications and safety steps can be taken.

Chronic Symptoms

Parents of children with chronic symptoms of colds/allergies may be asked to have their child checked by a physician to rule out any infection. Written documentation from a physician may be required for readmission if your child has had a communicable disease.

Illness Procedures

Illness Prevention

- Handwashing and hygiene practices
- Cleaning and sanitizing procedures
- Safe food handling procedures
- Reporting illness symptoms to administration

Illness Response

If symptoms develop while a child is in care:

- The child will be separated from the group as appropriate and supervised until pick-up
- Families will be notified promptly
- If symptoms become severe, emergency medical services will be contacted and families will be notified immediately

Temperature Screening (Ear & Forehead Only)

Thermometer

- Tympanic (Ear) thermometers
- Infrared temporal (Forehead) thermometers

Exclusion

- A tympanic (Ear) temperature above 100°F accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness
- An infrared temporal (Forehead) temperature above 100°F accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness

Temperature Verification & Final Decision

Administration will verify all temperatures when fever is suspected and has final determination on whether a child must be sent home.

Communication & Pick-up Expectations for Illnesses & Incidents

Communication

The school will communicate promptly with parents/guardians when a child exhibits symptoms of illness or requires exclusion due to illness, including head lice. Illness-related information will be handled with privacy and sensitivity, and confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with applicable regulations.

The Willow School administration reserves the final decision-making authority regarding the reintegration of sick children into the school environment to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. Children must stay home if they are sick, contagious, or unable to participate comfortably in the school day.

Pick-Up Requirement When Sick

If your child becomes ill during the school day and requires exclusion, families must pick up their child **within 1 hour of notification**.

Daily Health Checks

Staff complete a visual health check at arrival. Children who appear unwell may be refused care.

Staff may look for signs such as:

- Unusual fatigue
- Persistent coughing or sneezing
- Fever symptoms
- Unusual behavior or discomfort

If visible symptoms are present, a temperature check may be completed using approved methods (Ear or Forehead only).

Return to Care After Illness

Please keep administration and the teacher informed of your child's health. We make every attempt to keep our environment healthy from any illnesses and/or communicable diseases.

Symptom Free

- A child must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to school.
- A child must be free from vomiting and/or diarrhea for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Documentation

Children excluded or sent home due to illness must provide administration with return- to-school statement from a healthcare professional confirming that the child no longer has an excludable disease or condition and/or are no longer contagious and are cleared to return to school.

For children who are sent home with fever and/or symptoms of an illness for more than 48 hours, it is at the discretion of administration to request a doctor's note stating the diagnosis of the illness and a return to school release for readmission. This also applies to children who are unwell and kept home from school, including over the weekend.

Return to Care After Injury Requiring Medical Care

Documentation

If a child sustains an injury that required professional medical evaluation or treatment such as, but not limited to, a buckle fracture, broken bone, stitches, concussion, or other significant injury a Return to School Note from a licensed medical provider must be submitted to administration before the child may resume attendance.

The Return to School Note must:

- Confirm that the child is medically cleared to return to school, and
- Clearly outline any activity restrictions, accommodations, or special care instructions, including duration (e.g., no running, modified physical activity, splint/cast care, lifting restrictions, etc.).

Restrictions

Families are responsible for providing updated documentation if restrictions change or are extended. Staff will follow all documented medical restrictions to support the child's safety and well-being while at school. If required documentation is not provided, or if restrictions cannot be reasonably accommodated, the school may require the child to remain at home until appropriate clearance is received.

Incident / Illness Reports (Child Care Licensing Form)

The Willow School documents incidents and illnesses to ensure families are informed and appropriate records are maintained.

When utilizing the Texas Child Care Licensing incident form, it may be used for:

- Injury requiring medical treatment or hospitalization
- Incident that places, or may place, a child at risk for injury or harm
- Illness requiring hospitalization
- Incidence of a child or employee contracting a communicable disease

The report will be provided:

- In person (Handed to the parent/guardian)
- Or sent by email

Parents/guardians must sign the incident/illness report within 48 hours of notification.

Sibling Illness Policy

In the event that one child in a family is diagnosed with a contagious illness, the following measures are required for siblings to return to school:

- A doctor's note must be submitted for each sibling confirming they have been evaluated and are cleared to return to school.
- Families are required to notify the school immediately if one child shows symptoms of a contagious illness so appropriate measures can be taken to protect the health of other students and staff.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES & EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE PROCEDURES

The Willow School is committed to keeping children safe and responding quickly during medical emergencies.

In the Event of a Medical Emergency

If a child experiences a medical emergency, staff will take immediate action to protect the child's health and safety. This may include:

- Providing appropriate first aid
- Calling **911** when needed
- Contacting the child's parent/guardian immediately
- Contacting emergency contacts if a parent/guardian cannot be reached

Emergency Medical Transportation

If emergency medical services determine a child must be transported for care, the child may be transported by ambulance to the nearest appropriate medical facility.

A staff member may accompany the child when possible and appropriate, while maintaining supervision requirements for other children in care.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Adding parent/guardian phone number and address into Brightwheel profile
- Keeping emergency contact information current in Brightwheel
- Being available by phone during school hours
- Picking up their child as soon as possible when notified but no later than one hour from notification

Documentation

The Willow School will document emergency incidents using appropriate licensing documentation and school records. Parents/guardians will be notified and may be required to sign documentation within required timelines.

Medication Administration

The Willow School is committed to ensuring the safe administration of medication to children when necessary. Prescription medication will be dispensed when required more than 2x daily.

General Medication Requirements

- All medication (prescription and over-the-counter) must be brought directly to administration for review and approval.
- Medication may not be given to teaching staff or any other personnel.
- Medication may not be left in a child's bag, cubby, lunchbox, or any personal belongings.
- A completed medication authorization form must be on file prior to any medication being administered.
- Only trained staff members who have received proper medication administration training will administer medication.

Prescription Medication

Prescription medication must be:

- In the original pharmacy-labeled container
- Clearly labeled with the child's full name
- Clearly labeled with dosage instructions

Medication will only be administered according to the exact dosage instructions on the prescription label. Under no circumstances will medication be given in excess of or less than the prescribed amount.

Over-the-Counter Medication

Over-the-counter medication must be:

- In the original container
- Labeled with the child's full name
- Labeled with the date the medication was brought to school

Medication will only be administered according to the manufacturer's labeled dosage instructions unless otherwise directed by a licensed healthcare provider. Under no circumstances will medication be given in excess of or less than the recommended dosage.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DRILLS

Minimum Standards 746.501(5)(23)

Emergency Relocation Site(s)

In the event of an emergency that requires evacuation from the school building, The Willow School will relocate children to a safe location as directed by emergency officials and administration.

Primary relocation: The Willow School parking lot

Alternate relocation: Best Li'l Hair House parking lot – 802 S 37th. Temple TX (house nextdoor)

Families will be notified as soon as possible through:

- Brightwheel messaging
- Phone call (When urgent or time-sensitive)

The relocation site information will be provided to families and may be updated as needed.

Emergency Reunification Procedures

In the event of an emergency, The Willow School will follow reunification procedures to ensure children are released safely and accurately.

Parents/guardians must:

- Bring a valid photo ID
- Follow instructions provided by administration
- Remain calm and patient while children are safely released

Children will only be released to individuals listed as authorized pick-up contacts in the child's file.

Emergency Drills

The Willow School conducts required emergency drills, including fire and sheltering drills.

To ensure drill effectiveness:

- Drill times are not announced in advance
- Parents may not sign children in or out during an active drill
- Parents may wait with their child's class in the designated safe zone until the drill ends

In the event of a real emergency requiring closure, administration will notify families. Children must be picked up as directed, and families should be prepared to respond promptly.

The Willow School Emergency Plan is located on the parent education wall inside the main building.

CLEANING & DISINFECTION: Force of Nature

The Willow School maintains health and sanitation practices including:

- Routine disinfection of frequently touched surfaces
- Regular sanitizing of classroom materials and toys
- Active teaching and monitoring of handwashing
- Staff support for cough/sneeze hygiene and safe tissue disposal
- Ongoing staff training related to illness recognition and prevention

For the safety and health of our students and staff, The Willow School uses Force of Nature as our primary cleaning and disinfecting solution.

Force of Nature is a multi-purpose cleaner, deodorizer, and EPA-registered disinfectant that kills 99.9% of viruses, bacteria, mold, and mildew when used as directed. It is listed on the EPA's List N of disinfectants approved for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), and carries a federal EPA registration number (#93040-1). This means the product has been tested and approved for effective disinfection in settings such as schools and daycares. ([Force of Nature](#))

Force of Nature works by using a small appliance to convert salt, water, and vinegar into a powerful cleaning solution that includes hypochlorous acid (a disinfectant also produced by the immune system) and sodium hydroxide, making it strong enough for cleaning and disinfecting yet free from harsh toxic chemicals often found in conventional cleaners. ([Force of Nature](#))

This solution is effective on a variety of surfaces, safe for use around children when used according to label directions, and helps reduce reliance on multiple cleaning products. ([Force of Nature](#))

For more information about the product and how it works, visit the official site: <https://www.forceofnatureclean.com>. ([Force of Nature](#))

NUTRITION & SLEEP

Minimum Standards 746.501(10)

Minimum Standards 746.2901

The Willow School supports healthy eating habits and provides meal and food service practices that meet Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards.

Food Safety and Meal Practices

- Prior to mealtimes, all children will wash their hands.
- Children will be supervised during meals and snacks.
- Meals and snacks will be served in a safe and sanitary manner.
- Families must provide foods that are safe, age-appropriate, and ready to eat.
- Staff will follow allergy and food safety procedures to reduce risk of exposure.
- The center will not microwave any food.

Food Storage & Utensils

- All children must bring a clearly labeled lunchbox each day.
- Children are also required to bring a clearly labeled water bottle filled with water daily. Water bottles should arrive full and ready for use throughout the day.
- Parents or guardians must ensure that all food sent to school is properly stored, clearly labeled with the child's name.
- Foods requiring refrigeration must be packed with an ice pack.
- Parents or guardians should provide containers and utensils that are suitable for their child's age and developmental stage.

*We have extra cups, utensils, plates, and bowls. Children will be given these supplies if they are forgotten.

Food Expectations

Families are responsible for sending a nutritious lunch daily that supports healthy growth and learning. We encourage parents to send fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein-rich items that give children lasting energy throughout the day.

Restricted Foods

- Candy
- Soda
- Popcorn
- Excessive sweets

Breakfast

If breakfast is brought to school, it must be finished by 7:45 a.m.

Snacks

Infant

Snacks will be provided for infants who are eating solid foods. A weekly snack calendar will be shared with families in advance. It is the parent's responsibility to notify Administration and classroom staff if their child has any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or is unable to eat any of the listed snacks.

Toddler & Primary

Toddler and primary have a monthly snack calendar that is posted in the classroom. Students will be given an AM & PM snack. It is the parent's responsibility to notify Administration and classroom staff if their child has any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or is unable to eat any of the listed snacks.

Anti-Choking Devices (Dechokers)

The Willow School maintains anti-choking devices (Dechokers) as an additional emergency response tool. These devices are designed for use on individuals weighing 22 pounds and above. Dechokers are not a substitute for standard choking response procedures.

All staff are trained in age-appropriate choking response procedures, including back blows, abdominal thrusts, and CPR. The Dechoker may be used only in accordance with manufacturer guidelines and staff training during a choking emergency.

Allergies and Food Restrictions

- The Willow School takes allergies seriously. Families must notify administration of any food allergies or dietary restrictions. Children with food allergies must have the appropriate written action plan on file.
- Families are encouraged to introduce common allergens at home first (such as peanut, egg, dairy, wheat, soy, and sesame), following guidance from their child's pediatrician.

Nut-Free Infant Classroom (Allergen Safety)

To help keep all children safe as they begin eating solid foods, the Infant Classroom is a **nut-free environment**. Many infants are still early in their food journey, and not all children have been introduced to common allergens. Because allergic reactions can be serious and can occur without warning, we take extra precautions to reduce risk and support a safe feeding environment for every child.

Water

The Willow School provides drinking water for students to refill their personal water bottles throughout the day. Water is stored in five-gallon water jugs and is accessible to students at all

times. Students are encouraged to independently refill their own bottles and are taught how to properly and safely use the water systems.

Water bottles are checked by staff throughout the day to ensure students are drinking water regularly. Bottles are refilled as needed, especially prior to outdoor transitions, to help maintain proper hydration.

Our water jugs are refilled with Reverse Osmosis (RO) water to ensure high-quality drinking water. We maintain multiple jugs on campus; however, in the event that jugs are temporarily empty, students may use sink faucets to refill their water bottles.

Temple's municipal water is routinely tested to ensure it meets or exceeds safety requirements. Based on testing during our renovation, as well as municipal compliance standards, our water has been deemed safe for student use.

Infant Feeding

Infant Feeding Plans

For children under 12 months of age, an infant feeding plan is required and must be updated monthly (or as needed) to reflect current feeding needs and developmental changes. Families must provide all required bottles, breastmilk/formula, and food items as instructed by administration and the child's classroom.

Introducing Common Allergens at Home

Before an infant may bring a new food to school, the food must be tried at home at least three (3) separate times, without any signs of an allergic reaction. This helps ensure that new foods are tolerated in a familiar environment where families can monitor closely.

Feeding Supplies

- All baby bottles (including the cap) must be clearly labeled with the child's name and current date. Formula or expressed milk must be brought in appropriate amounts for feeding.

Children 12 months and older must bring:

- A labeled reusable water bottle
- A labeled bento box that they can open independently (or with little assistance). The bento box must be placed inside a lunch box with an ice pack

Infant Food

- Labeled snacks may be left at the school until consumed. Snacks will be stored in labeled snack containers.
- Labeled pouches and baby food jars will be stored in the classroom refrigerator in labeled snack containers.

Infant Feeding Safety Practices

- Any milk warmed must be used within two hours or it will be discarded.
- Thawed breastmilk will not be refrozen.
- Breastmilk stored in the freezer will be used within six months. After that six months, the frozen breastmilk will either be sent home or discarded, based on the family's preference. It is the parent's responsibility to clearly communicate their preference to classroom staff.
- Breastmilk stored in the refrigerator will be used within 24 hours. Breastmilk pouches will either be sent home at the end of the day or discarded, based on the family's preference. It is the parent's responsibility to clearly communicate their preference to classroom staff.
- Any opened jars or pouches will either be sent home at the end of the day or discarded, based on the family's preference. It is the parent's responsibility to clearly communicate their preference to classroom staff.
- Bottles will be warmed as needed using approved classroom procedures. Microwaves will not be used to heat bottles.
- All bottles and milk containers must be clearly labeled with the child's name and date.

Infant Milk Preparation & Bottle Heating

Milk may be brought to school in the manner that works best for each family.

Breastmilk may be:

- Brought in individual, labeled bottles or breastmilk storage bags
- Sent in a milk storage/mixer container
- Frozen breastmilk in labeled milk storage bags. Frozen breastmilk may be stored in the classroom freezer.

Formula may be:

- Pre-portioned into individual labeled bottles
- Sent as a full, labeled formula container
- Sent in a milk storage/mixer container

A Baby Brezza may be used in the classroom for formula preparation, when applicable.

Breastfeeding Support Policy

Minimum Standards 746.501(24)

The Willow School supports breastfeeding families and welcomes parents/guardians who choose to breastfeed or provide breast milk while their child is in care.

Breastfeeding Space

The Willow School will provide a designated and comfortable space within the school for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk. This space will be:

- Private and quiet

- Equipped with an adult-sized seat
- Furnished with a comfortable chair, side table, and appropriate lighting

The designated space will also have access to electrical outlets to accommodate breast pumps if needed.

Welcoming Environment

The Willow School promotes a non-discriminatory and supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers. Mothers are encouraged to breastfeed or provide breast milk without fear of judgment or discrimination.

Flexible Feeding Schedules

The school acknowledges and supports flexible feeding schedules to accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers and their infants.

Rest Period

The Willow School provides a daily rest period for children in accordance with Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards.

- Children aged 18 months and older who are in care for five or more consecutive hours are provided with a supervised sleep or rest period after the noon meal, or as needed.
- The sleep or rest period will not exceed three hours per day.
- Rest environments are supervised at all times.
- Children who are awake after resting or sleeping for one hour will be allowed to participate in alternative, quiet activities until the nap/rest time concludes for the other children.
- Children will not be forced to sleep. No items will be placed on their heads or bodies to induce sleep. Children will not be confined in restrictive devices to compel rest or sleep.
- Bedding and rest mats are labeled with first and last name and stored to prevent cross-contamination.
- Families must provide any required nap items.

Nap Items

- Blankets for 12+ months
- Mat cover (can be a king size pillow cover or a nap mat cover)
- Nap mats:
 - <https://a.co/d/1RVV6EO>
 - <https://a.co/d/3xQO2KJ>

*Please do not send stuffed animals or pillows.

Safe Sleep Policy (Infants)

Expectations:

- Infants sleep in an approved crib
- Floor beds remain free of loose blankets, pillows, toys, and extra items unless medically required
- Floor beds must have a firm mattress and snug fitting sheets
- Staff monitor infants during rest periods

- Swaddling and not permitted or used unless Sleep Exception Form that includes a signed statement from a healthcare professional stating that swaddling the child for sleeping purposes is medically necessary
- Sleeveless sleep sacks are permitted
- Infants who can independently roll from back to front and front to back may sleep on their stomach.
- Infants are placed on their backs to sleep unless medically exempt until they are able to roll from back to belly and belly to back.

Infant Soothing

At The Willow School, we do not practice or support the “cry-it-out” method.

We believe that crying is a form of communication. Whether a child is crying during sleep time or while awake, we respond promptly and compassionately to meet their needs. Our goal is to ensure each child feels safe, secure, and supported.

Our Process

When a child is crying, caregivers will:

1. Check and change the child’s diaper if needed.
2. Offer a feeding if appropriate.
3. Comfort the child through holding and soothing.

During rest time, teachers may gently pat or soothe children to help them fall asleep. We prioritize responsive care and work to create a calm, nurturing sleep environment.

We believe consistent, loving responses build trust and support healthy emotional development.

INCLUSIVE SERVICES & CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL CARE NEEDS

Minimum Standards 746.501(30)

The Willow School is committed to providing inclusive services and supporting children with special care needs when possible and appropriate. Our goal is to partner with families to create a safe, supportive, and developmentally appropriate environment that allows each child to participate meaningfully in daily classroom routines and activities.

Identification and Assessment

- Families must notify administration of any special care needs prior to enrollment or as soon as the need is identified.
- The school will collaborate with parents/guardians to better understand the child's strengths, needs, and any necessary accommodations.
- When appropriate, the school may request input from qualified professionals (Example: pediatricians, therapists, or educators) to support planning and safe participation.

Individualized Care Plan (ICP)

- The Willow School will work collaboratively with parents/guardians and relevant professionals to develop an Individualized Care Plan (ICP) when needed.
- The ICP may include strategies, accommodations, safety procedures, goals, and any required documentation that supports the child's participation in care.
- The ICP will be reviewed and updated as needed based on the child's progress or changes in needs.

The Willow School will work collaboratively with families to support the child through:

- Individualized planning for participation in daily activities
- Reasonable accommodations when appropriate
- Consistent communication between home and school
- Review of medical or therapeutic recommendations provided by the family
- Maintaining required documentation in the child's file

Families may be required to provide:

- A written care plan or action plan (As applicable)
- Training for staff specific to the child's needs
- Updated documentation from the child's healthcare provider

If the school determines it cannot safely meet a child's needs without compromising supervision, safety, or staffing requirements, administration will meet with the family to discuss next steps and possible alternative care options.

Inclusive Environment

- The Willow School strives to maintain an inclusive environment where children of all abilities feel welcomed, respected, and supported.
- Reasonable accommodations may be implemented when feasible and appropriate, including classroom adjustments, adapted materials, or modified routines.

- If adaptive equipment or specialized resources are identified as needed for the child to participate safely, the parent/guardian is responsible for providing the equipment/resource and ensuring it is properly labeled and approved for use.
- While the Children's Center will assist families in connecting with appropriate community resources and services, it is the **parent/guardian's responsibility** to arrange for services and/or payment.

Trained Staff and Ongoing Support

- Staff will receive training as needed to support children with special care needs, including understanding accommodations, safe procedures, and communication strategies.
- The Willow School may require additional staff training or documentation from a healthcare provider to ensure the child's needs can be met safely.

Outside Therapy Policy

The Willow School supports and encourages outside therapists (including Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, and other related services) to provide services on campus when appropriate.

All therapists must check in at the office upon arrival and present both a valid professional identification badge and a driver's license.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- Communicate the date and time of all scheduled therapy sessions.
- Provide the full name of the therapist and the name of the therapy provider/company.
- Notify the school of any changes to the schedule or provider in advance.

The Willow School will make every reasonable effort to accommodate therapy services; however, accommodations are subject to scheduling and operational needs.

Collaboration and Communication

- The Willow School values regular communication with families and will partner with parents/guardians to maintain consistency between home and school.
- Families may be asked to attend meetings, provide updates, and collaborate on strategies that support the child's success.

If the school determines it cannot safely meet a child's needs without compromising supervision, safety, staffing requirements, or the well-being of other children in care, administration will meet with the family to discuss next steps and possible alternative care options.

Life-Threatening Allergies or Medical Needs

Children with life-threatening allergies or ongoing medical conditions must have an appropriate written medical action plan on file (Example: food allergy action plan). All medical action plans must be current and kept up to date at all times.

The action plan must include:

- The type and name of medication
- Clear instructions for administration
- Signs and symptoms to monitor
- Steps to take in case of an emergency

Staff will follow the child's action plan as written. The plans must be updated annually or more frequently if any modifications are made.

Medical Action Plans

Children with recurring medical needs, including food allergies, asthma, or other chronic conditions, must have the appropriate written medical action plan on file. The School will follow the plan in place.

All required medical documentation, action plans, and necessary supplies must be provided before the child begins school to ensure staff are properly informed and prepared to support the child's medical needs safely and effectively.

Any family with a child who has a medical action plan or requires special medical procedures while at school, must schedule and attend a meeting with administration prior to the child's first day of attendance. Administrative staff will review written instructions provided by the child's health care provider and will obtain additional training, if necessary, to ensure proper implementation of the procedure.

Teaching staff will be informed of all relevant medical information to support the child's health, safety, and well-being while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Following this meeting, both the family and administration will review and sign a Medical Plan Agreement outlining the responsibilities and procedures for care.

Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

The Willow School does not maintain unassigned epinephrine auto-injectors for emergency use at this time.

Children with known allergies requiring epinephrine must have:

- A prescribed epinephrine auto-injector provided by the parent/guardian
- A written allergy action plan on file
- Medication authorization completed prior to attendance

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Grievance Procedure

We are committed to developing relationships of mutual trust with the families we serve. We respect the dignity of each family, including culture, customs, language, and beliefs.

If a parent/guardian has a concern about a policy or procedure:

- The concern should first be discussed with the child's teacher respectfully and privately
- If the concern is not resolved, the parent/guardian should bring it to administration
- If additional support is needed, administration will schedule a follow-up meeting and work collaboratively toward resolution

The Willow School recognizes that all families should be given the opportunity to voice concerns.

Staff Qualifications & Ongoing Professional Development

(Texas Rising Star Alignment)

The Willow School is committed to maintaining a high-quality early childhood program supported by well-trained staff. All employees are required to meet Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and participate in ongoing professional development to support best practices in early childhood education.

The Willow School strives to meet or exceed expectations aligned with Texas Rising Star quality standards through ongoing staff training and development.

Staff training and professional development may include, but is not limited to:

- Child growth and development
- Health and safety practices
- Supervision and active monitoring
- Positive guidance and behavior support
- Classroom management and routines
- Curriculum implementation (Montessori-aligned)
- Emergency preparedness procedures
- Professional communication and family partnership

The Willow School maintains documentation of required training and professional development in each employee's personnel file.

HANDBOOK UPDATES & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

At The Willow School, we believe strong partnerships with families are the foundation of a meaningful early childhood experience. Our Parent Handbook supports that partnership by clearly outlining our policies, procedures, and shared expectations.

Families receive access to the Parent Handbook at initial enrollment and again during re-enrollment each school year. The handbook is also available at any time in the Brightwheel app and on our school website for easy reference.

We ask that all parents/guardians carefully review the handbook and sign the acknowledgment form confirming that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies and procedures outlined.

If updates or revisions are made during the school year, families will be notified in writing. You will be asked to sign an updated acknowledgment indicating that you have reviewed and understand the changes.

We value open communication and encourage families to reach out with any questions. Parents have the right to review and discuss school policies and procedures by scheduling a meeting with the Director at any time.

PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

2025–2026 School Year

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed The Willow School Parent Handbook for the 2025–2026 school year.

I understand that the Parent Handbook contains important information regarding The Willow School’s policies, procedures, and expectations. I agree to comply with all policies as a condition of my child’s enrollment.

I understand that The Willow School may update handbook policies as needed, and that I will be notified of changes through Brightwheel as soon as they are made available. I acknowledge that I may be required to sign an additional acknowledgment form when updates or revisions are issued.

Child’s Full Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Second Parent/Guardian Name (Print) (Optional): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____