



The Sweetgrass School

Parent Handbook

effective January 1, 2025

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1. Business Hours/Scheduling/Arrival and Dismissal

The Sweetgrass School is open Monday-Friday from 7:15am-5:30pm and offers 3 scheduling options:

1) Monday-Friday (Full-time)

2) Monday/Wednesday/Friday (3 Day) - only applicable for children under 3 years old
If your child is enrolled in a part-time program, he or she will be transitioned to a full-time schedule the August following his or her 3rd birthday.

3) Tuesday/Thursday (2 Day) - only applicable for children under 3 years old
If your child is enrolled in a part-time program, he or she will be transitioned to a full-time schedule the August following his or her 3rd birthday.

All schedules are for a full day of child care. Parents are welcome to drop off/ pick up anytime during business hours (7:15am-5:30pm). Any child picked up after 5:31pm will be charged a flat fee of \$25.00. Beginning at 5:41, an additional \$25 will be charged in 10-minute increments until the child is picked up.

2. Family/School Contact

Contact between The Sweetgrass School and our families is highly valued. Throughout the school day, parents can utilize the ProCare messaging system to communicate with their child's teachers, and can contact the administrative team via the school cell phone.

TSS Admin Cell Phone: 843-801-7099

Please add this number to your contacts. This is the number TSS administrators will use for parent contact during business hours and one that parents may call or text during the day to convey any message regarding your child. We ask that you not share this number with anyone outside of our school community, as it is only for current parents' use.

For any urgent concerns that arise after business hours, family members can contact the school's Director, Lauren Mathewes, via email lauren@thesweetgrassschool.com.

**The following email addresses can be used for contacting the
administration team:**

Lauren Mathewes, Director: lauren@thesweetgrassschool.com

Charlotte Pilato, owner: charlotte@thesweetgrassschool.com

Britton Edwards, owner: britton@thesweetgrassschool.com

3. Tuition and Payment

a. Tuition and Payment Procedures

Tuition is due bi-weekly according to the 2025 calendar provided. All families are **required** to maintain a ProCare Automated Payment Processing form linked to an active checking/savings account or credit card. Tuition is processed on Fridays using the account on file. No refunds or credits will be issued for observed holidays or child absences. The Sweetgrass School does not offer tuition-free weeks for family vacation or holidays.

A returned ACH draft will result in a \$100 fee and the child may not attend school until the account balance has been paid.

b. Fees:

-Yearly Registration Fee: Families will be charged a yearly registration fee of \$100.00.

This will be automatically processed on August 1, 2025.

-Late pick-up charges: Any child picked up after 5:31pm will be charged a flat fee of \$25.00.

For each 10 minutes that the child is left past closing, an additional \$25.00 will be charged.

-Additional charge: Parents will be held financially responsible for any property destroyed as a result of their child's behavior.

c. Sibling Discount

A sibling discount will be given to families with more than one child enrolled at The Sweetgrass School. If both children are full-time, the younger sibling will pay full tuition and the eldest sibling will receive a 5% discount. If the siblings have different schedules, the child with the fewest scheduled days will receive the discount.

d. Program Withdrawal/Removal

A 30 day notice is required to withdraw your child from The Sweetgrass School. Notification must be provided to an administrator via email. Failure to provide adequate notice will result in your being charged tuition for the remainder of the 30-day period. Tuition will always be billed in week-long increments, meaning a child will pay for a complete (Monday-Friday) final week.

The Sweetgrass School will not give credit, refund, or discount tuition for any extended period of absence, including vacation.

The Sweetgrass School reserves the right to cancel enrollment for the following reasons:

- Non-payment of tuition
- A child's needs exceeding the capabilities of our center
- A child or family member displaying behaviors or actions that threaten or endanger the safety and well-being of other children or staff.
- Failure to comply with center policies as outlined in this handbook.

4. General Policies & Procedures

a. Parent/Child Access

Parents have free and full access to their children at any time that the child is in the school building unless otherwise stipulated by court order. The Sweetgrass School requires a copy of any court order pertaining to custody rights and/or restrictions that are expected to be followed. If your family has specific circumstances or requests of this nature, please speak to or email the Director individually.

b. Parent and Visitor Conduct

The Sweetgrass School expects parents and visitors to adhere to the following expectations while in the school building and while interacting with our children. Failure to do so may result in removal from the program

- Parents are expected to abide by the school's sick policies- as posted on the DHEC website (<https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-011634.pdf>)
- Parents will communicate with all staff, children, and other parents in a positive, respectful manner.
- Parents and visitors will not take and/or share pictures of any child, other than their own, within the school

c. Clothing and Personal Items

Clothing: Please send children to school in clothes that are washable and appropriate for learning and play both in and out of doors. Please do not send your child to school wearing special items that cannot withstand this type of activity.

As children become more independent, it is best for them to be dressed in clothes that are easy for the child to manage on their own, especially when using the restroom.

Children should wear shoes that are comfortable and safe for indoor and outdoor play.

All children should have a spare set of clothes in their classroom for use in the event of an accident or spill. These clothes should be sent in a Ziplock bag with the child's name on it and will be kept in the classroom until they are used. Please ensure that your child always has a spare set of clothes that fit and are appropriate for the season.

Children are not permitted to wear any jewelry or accessories that could present a choking hazard. This includes, but is not limited to, teething necklaces and pacifier clips.

Please label all blankets and clothing, especially outerwear, with your child's name.

d. Confidentiality

In accordance with Federal laws, all student and staff information, records, and/or documentation will be held confidential. This includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, phone numbers, schedules, medical records, background information, assessment data, progress notes, and salaries/wages. The Department of Social Services will have access to the information required for licensing and accreditation purposes.

e. Transportation

The Sweetgrass School does not transport children to or from the facility.

5. Program & Curriculum

a. Program Overview

The Sweetgrass School follows the South Carolina Early Learning Standards for planning developmentally appropriate classroom activities.

South Carolina Early Learning Standards

The South Carolina Early Learning Standards are designed to focus instruction on what research has shown that children should know and be able to do along a continuum of development. These standards are grouped around five areas of childhood development: approaches to learning, social and emotional development, mathematics, language and literacy, and physical development and health. Teachers will use these standards to identify developmental goals for the children in their care to plan for engaging instruction designed to ensure progress toward the achievement of these goals, and to inform decisions regarding the instruction that they provide daily.

b. Teachers/Caregivers

All employees of The Sweetgrass School meet the criteria for employment outlined by the South Carolina DSS Regulations for Private and Public Child Care Centers. Each staff member has a high school diploma or its equivalent, meets both federal and state background checks, meets the DHEC health guidelines, and participates in 15 hours of continuing education classes each calendar year. The Sweetgrass School does provisionally employ persons (SC Statute 63-13-45 (A)).

c. Food and Nutrition

Breast Milk, Formula, and Purees: All infants' breast milk and/or formula must be supplied by the parent each day in pre-portioned, individual bottles clearly labeled with the child's name and date. These will be refrigerated in the classroom until they are ready for use. An "emergency" stash of breastmilk and formula may be kept on site. In this case, breastmilk should be frozen with the child's name and date written on the bag OR one measured portion of formula should be in a sealed container with the child's name and number of ounces of water needed written clearly on it. Parents will communicate feeding plans with the classroom teachers.

Any child who is eating purees must bring these in from home clearly labeled with his/her name and date written on the container. Parents of infants can notify the teachers or director when their child is ready to begin receiving the school-provided table foods. They will complete a Toddler Feeding Plan to outline any specific requests or needs.

Table Foods: Morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack will be offered to all children who are capable of eating table foods. If you choose to send in food from home, please be aware that The Sweetgrass School is a completely nut-free environment. If your child has any specific dietary restrictions, please communicate them with your child's teacher, the director, and document these on the Emergency Contact Form found in the Enrollment Package. Weekly menus are posted in the classrooms.

Water/Milk: When age-appropriate, children will be offered water throughout the day and a choice of milk or water with lunch. Children in the Green, Yellow, Navy, and Purple rooms are to bring in a labeled,

reusable water bottle with fresh water each morning. This will be refilled throughout the day. Parents are to take the water bottle home every day.

d. Diapering/Toilet Training

Diapering: Parents of children in diapers must supply their own disposable diapers, wipes, and diaper cream. Bags of diapers, packs of wipes, and creams should all be clearly labeled with the child's name. The Sweetgrass School does not permit the use of cloth diapers.

Toilet Training: While children are going through the toilet training process, it is very important for parents to keep the child's cubby supplied with several changes of clothes in case of accidents. Children that wear pull-ups are asked to come to school in the type of pull-ups with side-opening tabs, as these greatly help the teachers during changes. Parents are asked to please communicate clearly with your child's teacher and/or the director about expectations and/or information that relate to potty training.

6. Health & Safety

a. Care of Mildly Ill Children

The Sweetgrass School will provide care for mildly ill children only when the illness is considered non-communicable. Examples of these situations include allergies, ear infections, and dermatological problems (non-contagious). These children will be cared for in their normal classroom environment and will continue to follow the classroom's daily schedule. Should the illness progress to the point that the child shows signs of discomfort or distress, parents will be contacted and will be expected to pick the child up according to the policy listed below.

b. Sending Children Home

There are circumstances that may indicate the need for a child to be sent home from school early.

Children who become sick, are in obvious discomfort, or are displaying a symptom of a communicable illness will be sent home in order to ensure the health and safety of the overall school community. When it is determined that a child needs to be sent home, the following will occur:

- Parents will be contacted via text or phone call to pick up their child (phone 843-801-7099)
- If parents cannot be reached, the adults listed on the child's Emergency Contact form will be called in the order in which they are listed.
- One hour will be given to pick up the sick child. If the child is not picked up within that time frame, a late pick-up fee of \$25.00 will be applied.

c. Guidelines for Returning to School

The Sweetgrass School adheres to the South Carolina DHEC *Official School and Child Care Exclusion List of Contagious or Communicable Diseases* regarding when it is appropriate for your child to return to school after being ill. Please access these guidelines at

<https://dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/child-teen-health/school-exclusion>

If you have any questions regarding when it is acceptable for your child to return following an illness, please reach out to an administrator for help determining the appropriate time.

d. Accidents and Injuries

Minor accidents and injuries that occur throughout a typical school day will be handled by the school staff in

an appropriate and nurturing manner. Incident reports will be documented through the ProCare app and contact will be made to let the parent/guardian know what has happened, either via text or at pickup.

In the event of a more serious accident or injury, an administrator will immediately contact the parent/guardian. If you cannot be reached, we will work through the Emergency Contacts list until some form of contact is made. If deemed medically necessary, the paramedics/ambulance will be called.

Until the arrival of a parent, the administrators will oversee the care of the child and will make all decisions regarding treatment. If an ambulance is called, an administrator will accompany the child until parents arrive. MUSC Children's Hospital is the default hospital for ambulances in our area.

e. Immunization Policy

The Sweetgrass School, in compliance with the Department of Social Services' Child Care Licensing and Regulatory Services, requires that all children enrolled in the school maintain a current South Carolina Certificate of Immunization (DHEC Form 2740). The only acceptable exception to this requirement will be for **temporary** medical exemptions as determined by a licensed health care provider. A temporary medical exemption may be granted when a licensed physician has determined, for medical reasons, that a particular vaccine(s) required by this regulation is not advisable for the child at the typical time of administration. The exemption is granted when the physician completes and signs the South Carolina Certificate of Immunization containing the Medical Exemption (section 3). The physician must indicate that the exemption is temporary and provide a date that the temporary exemption expires. By the end of the exemption period, an updated South Carolina Certificate of Immunization (DHEC Form 2740) showing proof of the receipt of the immunization must be presented to the school in order for the child to remain enrolled.

f. Pick-Up Authorization

Upon enrollment, parents will complete a Pick-Up Authorization form that will list all adults, including parents, who have permission to pick up their child from school. Any adult not recognized by the front staff or classroom teachers will be checked against this form and required to show photo identification with an address matching the one listed before the child is dismissed. All adults, including parents, will be required to sign the child out each day via the ProCare system found at the front desk. In the event that an adult not listed on the Pick-Up Authorization form needs to pick your child up from school, written and signed permission from the parent must be received prior to the child's dismissal. The Sweetgrass School's staff members reserve the right to check identification of anyone who is unfamiliar to them.

g. Medication Policy

Any medication, prescription or over-the-counter, can only be administered at school with written permission from a parent or guardian on the school's Medication Authorization form. These forms can be found at the front desk and should be submitted to the director. Prescriptions must be in the original packaging and must include the child's first and last name, dosage, expiration date, and pharmacist listed. Any over-the-counter medications should be provided in original packaging and should have the child's name clearly written on it. All medications will be used only for the child for whom the medication is labeled and will not be given in excess of the recommended dose.

h. Tracking Children

The Sweetgrass School uses an electronic system, ProCare, to track all arrivals and dismissals of children. This system records times in and out of the building as well as which adult accompanies the child upon check-in and check-out. Throughout the day, staff members will track children using a paper copy

roll-system in compliance with the SC Department of Social Services Child Care Regulations.

i. Liability Insurance

The Sweetgrass School maintains liability insurance in accordance with SC Statute 63-13-45 (A). Proof of this insurance coverage is available upon request.

7. Behavior

a. Instruction and Discipline

The Sweetgrass School strives to maintain an environment where children are peaceful, respectful, and kind to others. Our goal is to teach children the values of patience and self-control. In order to achieve that goal, teachers employ a variety of behavior management techniques, such as positive reinforcement and redirection, that are intended to help the student modify his or her own behavior when it becomes disruptive to the learning or safety of others. **The Sweetgrass School does not allow corporal punishment under any circumstances.** Included in each student's Enrollment Package is a Discipline Policy form that outlines this policy. It is a requirement that the Discipline Policy form is signed yearly by all parents and kept in each child's file.

b. Injurious Behaviors Policy

Injurious behaviors, like biting, pushing, and scratching are not uncommon among young children. During early childhood, children are sensory learners and often explore their environment and interact with those around them in a physical manner. In combination with this, their undeveloped impulse control can lead children to biting or pushing as a way of making their needs known, especially before their language skills are fully developed. We realize that these behaviors can be a huge concern to parents, and we do everything we can to minimize the behavior while the children are in our care. Our teachers and staff are trained to recognize triggers and work hard to prevent and decrease incidents. Nonetheless, incidents like this do occasionally happen and when they do it often happens fast and without much warning.

We recognize that at times some children, for a variety of reasons, harm other children in class, usually without intention. Some reasons for biting are as follows:

- **Infants** (3 mon-15 mon) Experimental, sensory pleasure, teething
- **Toddlers** (16-36 mon) Frustration, fatigue, attention seeking, confined spaces, inability to communicate
- **Preschoolers** (3 and up) Aggression, deliberate, play fighting

At The Sweetgrass School, our goal is to reduce the occurrences of injury and ensure the safety and health of every child in the school. To reduce the frequency of these events, we employ the following strategies:

- Infants will be given positive teething and stimulating activities to reduce discomfort and soothe their gums. Examples: pacifiers, teething rings, teething tubes
- The child will be placed into an immediate time-out away from the group or activity and be told, "no biting/hitting/scratching!" When the time-out has ended, the child will be directed to a different activity and will be closely monitored for repeat behavior. Infants and toddlers will be offered a teether if they have attempted to bite.
- If a child injures another classmate or attempts to 3 times in one day, a parent will be required to pick the child up from school **immediately**. This is to prevent further incidents and injury to the child's classmates.

- After a child has been sent home **3 times**, he or she will be unenrolled from the Sweetgrass School effective the Friday following the 3rd incident.
- Parents will be notified when their child is involved in a injurious incident, via Procare Parent Engagement 's Incident Report function, whether their child was the aggressor or the one injured. In order to protect the privacy of our families and maintain the integrity of all children, the name of the other child involved will not be shared with parents.
- When an injury does occur, staff will check for broken skin. All injuries, whether the skin is broken or unbroken, will be washed with soap and water and be treated with a topical antibiotic. A cold compress will be applied to the area.

The Sweetgrass School

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form: 2025

I acknowledge the receipt of The Sweetgrass School's Parent Handbook for the 2025 calendar year.

I have familiarized myself with all information contained within the Parent Handbook and agree to observe the guidelines, policies, and procedures outlined for each of the following listed below:

Please initial on each line to indicate agreement and understanding:

_____ Tuition and Payment Procedures

_____ Program Withdrawal Policy

_____ Parent/Child Access Policy

_____ Immunization Policy

_____ Pick-Up Authorization Policy

_____ Medication Policy

_____ Guidelines for returning to school following an illness

<https://dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/child-teen-health/school-exclusion>

_____ Discipline Policy: **The Sweetgrass School does not allow corporal punishment under any circumstances**

_____ Injurious Behavior Policy

I understand that revisions to the Parent Handbook may occur and that all changes will be communicated through official notices. I understand that The Sweetgrass School has the sole right to make such changes and that all changes will supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies.

Child's Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____