



School Handbook

2019-2020 School Year



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GECKO GARDEN SCHOOL HANDBOOK, 2019-2020

1.0 Welcome to Gecko Garden School

Welcome to Gecko Garden School! We are an international, non-profit, Waldorf-inspired, English language preschool and kindergarten located in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. We celebrate diversity and multicultural understanding, welcoming children of all nationalities between 18 months and six years of age.

The policies and procedures described in this handbook are intended to support the Mission and Vision of our school, and create the healthiest possible environment for our children, teachers and families. Please familiarize yourself with this handbook and refer to it as necessary throughout the school year. Your signature on your enrollment form indicates your willingness to abide by these policies as well as any updates that are communicated to the parent body throughout the school year.

1.1 Our Vision and Mission

Gecko Garden School is a community of happy, caring, creative, collaborative individuals who are impassioned and empowered to create a safe and wholesome community for our children.

Our mission is to:

- ☞ Create a community that strives every day to bring happiness to its children, families and teachers.
- ☞ Create a community that values and stresses a strong connection to nature and natural practices within its urban environment.
- ☞ Provide a play-based, Waldorf-inspired education to our children that meets them and serves them at each stage of their development.
- ☞ Inspire and encourage curiosity in our children and families, forming the basis for a life-long love of learning.

1.2 Our History

Gecko Garden School originated as the 'Little Gecko' and 'Garden' playgroups in the late 1990s. The two groups joined in 2001 to create the first parent-run preschool in Phnom Penh. It retained its parent-run structure, and in 2015 formalized it according to the requirements from Cambodia's Ministry of Education. The school and its loyal, caring and kind group of Khmer and international teachers have welcomed more than one thousand children in the years since, maintaining an ethos that values play-based learning, multicultural diversity, and family involvement.

In 2018, the teachers and parents of Gecko Garden School decided to deepen our commitment to providing the most valuable, progressive and socially-appropriate education in the world, by becoming the first school in Cambodia to adopt the Waldorf education curriculum and become Waldorf/Steiner-inspired. We believe that this decision will deepen the educational offerings and relationships within our community, and bring an important approach to education to Cambodia. We are proud to create Cambodia's first Waldorf school, joining the 1,857 Waldorf kindergartens and 1,092 Waldorf schools in more than 70 countries around the world, in the 100th year of Waldorf education.

In 2019, the school determined that changes were required to its structure to support its continued growth and adoption of Waldorf education. Therefore, the school is transitioning to a more professionalized approach, as described in this document.

1.3 Introduction to Waldorf/Steiner Education

Waldorf education was founded by the Austrian philosopher, scientist and spiritual teacher Rudolf Steiner. Waldorf schools, also known as Steiner schools, are named after the first “Waldorfschule” which Steiner founded in Stuttgart, Germany in 1919 for the children of the workers at the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory. In Waldorf education, Steiner developed a system of education that strives to produce independent, free-thinking individuals who can offer value in any field and navigate any life challenge, while gently understanding and meeting them at their stage of development. In addition to Waldorf education, Steiner is known for the creation and development of biodynamic agriculture, curative education for children with special needs, anthroposophy, anthroposophical medicine, and various artistic expressions including an art of movement called eurythmy.

Since their founding in 1919, Waldorf schools have spread throughout Europe, then worldwide. Today there are thousands of Waldorf schools in more than 70 countries around the world, in countries as diverse as Mexico, South Africa, Canada, Italy, Estonia, Japan, Argentina, Australia, Israel, India, and Egypt, and now Cambodia. Each school in each country is independent, and the particular cultural influences of the country or community surrounding the school are brought into the school’s curriculum. Nevertheless, all Waldorf schools work with a specific understanding of child development, given form by Steiner’s philosophy of anthroposophy. Overarching characteristics common to all Waldorf and Waldorf-inspired schools are:

- ∞ Understanding of humans as beings of body, mind and spirit, and educating all three with equal weight.
- ∞ Detailed understanding of child development in seven-year phases, each of which have unique and characteristic physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions.
- ∞ A curriculum evolved by the teachers based on their understanding of child development, Waldorf pedagogy, and the circumstances of the school to meet the needs of the specific children in their class.
- ∞ Material presented creatively and imaginatively to the students by the teacher through stories, puppet shows, drawings, and other activities, fostering a human connection to the class and the material.
- ∞ Cultivation of enduring human relationships between students, teachers and parents.
- ∞ Continuous self-education of the teachers in progressive, holistic techniques.
- ∞ Emphasis on moral qualities such as truth, beauty and goodness which are brought to the children in the actions of the adults around them, in the way the school and classrooms are built and cared for, and in the content of the lessons, especially through stories and fairy tales.
- ∞ Predictable rhythms to each day, which balance activity (movement, clapping games, etc.), a time for taking in (listening to stories or lessons), and a time for artistic activity.
- ∞ Seasonal arrangement of the curriculum to be in harmonious balance with nature, local seasons, and local cultural events and festivals.
- ∞ Practical activity, including cooking, handwork, age-appropriate construction, and care of the environment included as an essential part of learning.
- ∞ Focus on children first experiencing material with their hands and bodies, then developing an emotional relationship with it through artistic impressions, and finally creating an intellectual relationship through academic learning and discussion. This is referred to as Waldorf’s “hands, heart and head” approach.
- ∞ Discouraged use of electronic devices and media, especially by young children under seven years, with focus placed instead on healthy human connection and social skills.

There are national associations of schools in different countries and regions. Gecko Garden School, as a Waldorf-inspired school, is not certified as a Waldorf school. Rather, our teachers and community strive each day to provide the fullest Waldorf experience we are capable of at that moment, in collaboration with and with the support of the international community, making us Waldorf-inspired.

Adapted from “Waldorf 101” by Donna Simmons

Original Article Source: <https://www.christopherushomeschool.com/your-questions-answered/waldorf-101/>

1.4 The Gecko Garden School Curriculum

Our Waldorf-inspired preschool and kindergarten experience provides children with a sense of warmth, wonder and the magic of childhood in order to create a foundation of rich childhood memories and a sense of the goodness of life. We offer a play-based curriculum which integrates traditional Khmer festivals, stories, culture, songs, dances, and games along with many other international classics. The curriculum encourages children to *experience* the world with their senses. They develop their bodies, their social and language skills, and their imaginations through physical and creative play, handwork, cooking, rhyme, games and movement, singing, and storytelling. This approach provides the experiential foundation for understanding complex academic concepts later in their school life. Through attentive observation, facilitation and their calm loving presence in the classroom, our teachers create an active, healthy environment where each child can thrive and be children. The key tenets of Gecko Garden School's curriculum are:

- ☞ **Play.** The work of childhood is play, and free, imaginative play is the strongest foundation to take children into the academic years of primary school. Play at Gecko Garden School makes use of the natural environment and natural, open-ended toys to encourage the children's imagination and collaboration. Our teachers adapt the practical activities of daily life, including baking, cleaning, gardening, and handcrafts so that children can incorporate them into their play. As well as playing, the children experience artistic activities such as painting, drawing, modelling, sewing, singing, dancing, and storytelling through puppetry. Ample time is provided during the day for the children to play in the outdoor environment and classrooms.
- ☞ **Imitation.** Children from birth until seven years old are naturally imitative beings who observe and imitate all models set before them. As such, the primary method of instruction at Gecko Garden School is through imitation. We provide the children with kind, natural, curious, artistic, useful, and joyful models of behavior and environment. Imitating these characteristics from a formative age enables the children to weave them into the fabric of their beings and their lives.
- ☞ **Sense of home.** Our school space is thoughtfully designed and continuously evolving to give children a sense of warmth, beauty, home and family. The materials used are beautiful, soft, and natural. Great attention is paid to the detail of all things placed within the classroom. This sense of beauty and attention to detail are then imitated in the children's play. The classes are arranged in mixed age groupings, modeling the relationship of older and younger siblings where the older children learn to care for the younger, and younger children imitate the older ones. The daily rhythm supports the children's participation in activities at a slow, consistent pace that is reassuring and confidence building.
- ☞ **Rhythm.** The school days are structured to provide a gentle rhythm of daily, weekly, and seasonal activities. This brings the children a sense of security, self-confidence and empowerment as they always know and can anticipate what will happen next. This healthy rhythm helps establish the foundation for self-care, and provides gentle boundaries for the children that help prevent disciplinary incidents.
- ☞ **Sense of wonder, magic, and gratitude.** Childhood is a magical time that should be protected and preserved for as long as possible. The teachers make every effort to provide a loving environment with a pervading sense of their own joy and conviction that the world is good, and beautiful, and a special thing of which to be a part. This is achieved through the daily rhythm of songs, poems, stories, and most notably the deep intention put into every action and reaction of the teachers.
- ☞ **Sense of place and tradition.** A sense of place, culture and tradition are essential to happy communities. The school embraces Khmer culture to create a strong sense of celebration of the school community's place in Cambodia. International families also contribute their stories, celebrations and customs, creating a community which is culturally aware, and celebrates the many ways in which we are the same despite apparent differences.

The World Economic Forum and other international organizations have identified a number of key "21st century skills" as essential to today's children's success in their future academic programs, careers and lives. Schools

around the world are adjusting their approaches to teaching and learning to ensure that in addition to academics, students have explicit training in these skills. The ways in which Gecko Garden School's curriculum provides children with a sound foundation in these skills, and thereby amply prepares them to attend any primary school program in Cambodia or the world, is described below. In addition to the established 21st century skills, Gecko Garden School believes there are two additional, critical skills for future success which are vital points in our curriculum: imagination, and environmental appreciation and conservation.

- ☞ **Imagination.** Helping children develop a rich imagination is arguably the most critical work of early childhood. Children who are able to bring this imagination with them to their future years in school and eventually their careers will offer a valuable skill that is increasingly de-emphasized and lacking in our media-rich and academically standardized world. The children's imagination is cultivated by creating an environment free of media and other influencing factors, and encouraging children to follow their interests using open-ended materials and toys. Whether they pursue careers in healthcare, teaching, business, law, parenting, astrophysics, politics, or anything else, having an ability to innovate and imagine possibilities not yet seen by others will always be an essential skill.
- ☞ **Environmental appreciation and conservation.** We believe that the children's and our families' healthy relationship to and appreciation of the natural world is essential to our planet's and global society's future. The school strives to be plastic-free, and use only natural materials. Instead of relying on recycling and reuse of materials that are dangerous to the environment, our school teaches children how to use alternative natural materials and live without plastics and dangerous materials from a young age, helping establish the foundation for responsible adults who make creative use of natural resources to solve problems in ways that are healthy for themselves and the planet.

The way in which our curriculum meets the 21st century skills as established by the World Economic Forum is:

21 st Century Skill	Gecko Garden School Curriculum Approach
Foundational Literacies	
Literacy	Pre-literacy skills are developed through storytelling and circle time stories, which use rich vocabulary and imagery, and are rooted not in popular culture but in long tradition. This establishes a fundamental love for and curiosity about literature and stories. Additionally, the school's library is full of books which have been selected for their beauty and cultural diversity. This experience cultivating the love and curiosity for stories and literature strongly supports the academics of learning to read when the child enters primary school.
Numeracy	The children are introduced to the idea of numbers and math concepts, from counting items as they are painted, to folding cloth in different shapes, to using liquid and solid measures in cooking projects. This experience of mathematical concepts within practical day-to-day activities supports the academic learning of numbers and math in primary school and beyond.
Scientific literacy	The children experience the physical realities of the world through their play. For example, creating a tall stack of blocks may mean that it comes tumbling down. Children are invited to self-direct their explorations – perhaps stacking the blocks in a pyramid will have a different effect? Or a square? Using sticks to build a house may require stacking wood or other objects at a certain angle for it to stand upright. They are also given time for outdoor play and a chance to explore the natural world. Experiencing these realities supports the later academic work of naming and describing the scientific principles at work.
Cultural and civic literacy	Through our international school community and body of teachers, the children have unique and nearly unparalleled exposure to a variety of cultures, traditions and languages. Khmer

	and international festivals representing the traditions of our diverse student body are celebrated. This experience provides a foundation of global awareness and cross cultural skills that will serve the children as they embark on more academic studies later in school.
Financial literacy	As part of imitating the world around them, children replicate everyday situations in their play, such as setting up shops or restaurants. Children are encouraged to use their imaginations and should their play include money, they use buttons or shells or other materials as currency, and transact as they see fit.
Information communication technology literacy	Our school does not encourage the use of information communication technology between the ages of birth and seven years old. Although an important skill, Gecko Garden School feels it is critical to build a solid foundation in imagination, creativity, social, and communication skills at this age. All forms of information technology are recommended to be introduced later in the child's life. As such, there is no information technology used with the children at our school.
Competencies	
Critical thinking	The children are invited to observe and interact with the world around them in nature, their classrooms, and their peers; finding their own questions and challenges to be solved through their play. Teachers observe them and create the space for them to solve their problems themselves, or in collaboration with their peers whenever possible. This experience helps children build self-sufficiency, self-confidence and problem solving skills which will serve them their whole lives.
Creativity	The children are invited to experience creativity in a variety of different ways. During indoor and outdoor play, the children are invited to use their imagination and open-ended objects and materials to create the toys and props required by their play and stories. Additionally, the children are introduced to watercolor painting, beeswax modelling, and a variety of artistic pursuits. Their learning includes fine and gross motor skills requiring hand eye coordination, e.g. scissors, needles, and crayons, which will be relevant in creative pursuits and in learning to write.
Communication	As children under the age of seven learn best through imitation, the school strives to provide examples of excellent communication for the children to imitate. Communication within the school community is modelled by the teachers, administrators, parents, and other students. We seek to use positive and constructive communication techniques at all times when communicating on the school grounds. This helps the children develop a strong foundation of social and emotional intelligence, including being able to socialize confidently, and adapt their behavior appropriately to different occasions.
Collaboration	The children work independently and cooperatively within large and small groups to play, prepare their daily snack, and prepare their space for different activities throughout the morning. They develop a sense of community and of collaborating to meet the community's needs, which is a critical foundation for nearly all academic, professional, and social activities they will undertake in their lives.
Character Qualities	
Curiosity	The children learn through imitation in the early years. Small children are inherently curious about the world around them and especially the adults in their environment. Our teachers provide the children with a wide variety of interesting, creative and useful tasks to imitate

	and participate in. Teachers also seek to create the space for children to explore what they are curious about. This sense of curiosity and discovery through the act of doing builds the foundations for strong curiosity throughout the child's future studies and life.
Initiative	The children's day is built around a gentle, healthy rhythm that allows them to feel confident that they know what is coming next, and to initiate the next activities. They are taught how to do a variety of tasks which supports them in being confident to take initiative the next time. Children are given the space and freedom to choose their play.
Persistence/grit	The playground, classrooms and classroom activities are carefully and thoughtfully designed to provide the children with some areas of easy success to give them a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, and some areas providing greater challenge, encouraging them to stretch themselves intellectually and physically to meet the challenge. This helps the children build self-confidence, take reasonable risks, persevere, and feel willing to try new things. Teachers thoughtfully observe and support students' development by inviting them to join in activities.
Adaptability	The children learn through occasional changes in their rhythm or class due to holidays, other special events, new students, or the changes in their experience associated with their own developmental growth, to adjust their expectations to meet the new or temporary need of the community, and then re-establish their rhythm in a healthy, adjusted way. Additionally, the teachers do a number of physical activities with the children to help them develop both sides of their brain equally, including midline-crossing exercises and art activities, which promote flexibility and adaptability in thought as the child develops.
Leadership	The children are situated in mixed-age classes, which allow opportunities for the older children to care for the younger ones. This provides children with a sense of responsibility for caring for those in their community who cannot yet do for themselves. Older children are given opportunities to lead story time and puppet shows and other activities according to their interests, providing them with the self-confidence and self-view as leaders in appropriate situations.
Social and cultural awareness	Instead of changing classes and teachers each year, children work together in their established class groupings for multiple years with the same teachers. This arrangement enables the students to develop deep relationships with their peers and their teachers, truly understanding the depth of social interaction required to heal rifts, overcome obstacles, and move on with joy and collaboration. Because of the diverse cultures represented by our families from Cambodia and around the world, a great deal of cultural awareness is brought through exposure to the children's languages, customs, and families.
All underscored by...	
Lifelong learning	Waldorf education is famous for providing children with the foundation for a love of lifelong learning. This is achieved in a vast variety of ways, from the love and personal relationships established with the teachers; to the creative, artistic and beautiful presentation of the curriculum; to the joy and curiosity brought by the teachers, the families and the children themselves. Every activity is designed and conveyed in a manner to help the children feel a strong sense that the world is a good and magical place, which is worth knowing about, participating in, and protecting to the extent they possibly can throughout their life.

Pre-literacy at Gecko Garden School. Gecko Garden School’s approach to literacy is age-appropriate and thoughtfully designed to support children as their language and comprehension develops and evolves. The ability to read, and comprehend what is read, is a process that is rushed by many schools. The Waldorf approach, and Gecko Garden’s approach, mirrors the overall development of human language. That is, at first when babies are born they are capable of sounds only, and listening. Over time they develop a vocabulary of gesture, followed by an ever-growing vocabulary of words. As they begin to play, their experience of the world helps them begin to grasp concepts (e.g., what it is to carry a pail up a hill to fetch a pail of water) and symbolism (a block could stand in for a piece of food; by extension a written symbol could represent a sound). Exposure to rich, diverse vocabulary in stories, songs, rhymes, and games prepares the children for later sight-reading. Clear articulation of words introduces children to the sounds within each word, supporting competent spelling. As vocabulary develops, a sense of oral tradition emerges. This is both a connection to the content, imagination of what the content is describing, and retaining the human connection of a human as the source of the story. Storytelling is an integral part of the Waldorf early years pre-literacy curriculum, and is something that Gecko Garden School is taking seriously in its learning and teacher training initiative during the 2019-2020 school year. Then pictograms emerge, both in human tradition and in child development, as the earliest written form of recording a cherished story for posterity and retelling. Once vocabulary, individual sound recognition, and storytelling orally and through pictures exist, it is possible to assign a written symbol to a sound, then arrange multiple symbols in a row to represent the sounds in a word, and then finally to read the word back.

Gecko Garden School’s curriculum supports this process through:

- ☞ Storytelling, supporting the development of imagination, connection to the human source of the story, vocabulary, identification of sounds, modelling of concepts, sense of the beginning/middle/end of a story
- ☞ Play, supporting the experience of concepts, and use of language to navigate social situations and create plays and stories
- ☞ Rich vocabulary imparted in songs, rhymes, stories, supporting eventual writing, word recognition and sight reading
- ☞ Clear diction, supporting sound recognition and eventual spelling skills
- ☞ Drawing and watercolor painting, supporting imagination, storytelling through pictures, and fine motor skills for writing
- ☞ Storybooks, supporting recognition of writing and letters

Research and evidence suggest that when these components are in place and built upon in a careful, strategic way, a child will likely learn to write and then read very quickly when the ideas are introduced. Alternatively, approaches that introduce writing much earlier, concurrently with the development of concepts, often find that although children can write symbols representing words, their comprehension may be lagging. Although some children are developmentally ready to write and read quite early, many are not. Introducing writing and reading before they have a firm pre-literacy foundation puts the child at risk of frustration, loss of joy and related loss of interest in reading. A good article to read for more information is “Reading Instruction in Kindergarten: Little to Gain and Much to Lose.”

1.5 Our Classes

A summary of Gecko Garden School’s class offerings is below.

Class	Ages	Portion of Year
Preschool (Romdoul Class and Malis Class)	18 months to 3 years old	Weekdays, August through May
Kindergarten (Champa Class and Phka Chhouk Class)	3 years to 6 years old	
Full Day Program	18 months to 6 years old	
Parent and Child Group	Birth to 4 years old	August through May
Winter School	18 months to 6 years old	January, 2 weeks
Summer School	18 months to 6 years old	June, 5 weeks

Preschool and Kindergarten Classes. Gecko Garden School offers two preschool classes (ages 18 months to 3 years), and two kindergarten classes (ages 3 to 6 years). Each class is capped at 20 students. The classes are led by a Head Teacher, and assisted by at least two Teacher’s Assistants. These mixed age classes are thoughtfully created to provide a caring environment where younger children learn from the older, and older children care for the younger. The criteria considered when creating each mixed age class is the ages of the children; the needs of the individual children and the class as a whole; as well as the balance of ages and genders in the class.

Full Day Program. The full day kindergarten is a single mixed-age class for children ages 18 months to 6 years old, in the afternoon. The class is supervised by the Head Teacher and at least one Teacher’s Assistant. New in the 2019-2020 school year, the school provides lunch for children who participate in the Full Day Program, as part of the term tuition. The food we provide is nutritious, and is locally sourced and organic whenever possible. Special dietary needs will be accommodated. Families are asked not to send alternative food for lunch. This is because when the children all eat the same thing, there is less competition or distraction from eating the nutritious food. After lunch, the children are invited inside to nap and rest. As they wake, they are given time for supervised play with some gentle guided activities, inside the classroom and on the playground.

Parent and Child Group. The Parent and Child Group offers enrichment and support to parents and their young children from infancy to four years of age. Parents and children together enjoy a weekly session in a preschool classroom. Children are offered the chance to explore and play while parents connect, find a supporting community, discuss child development and parent issues, and learn about Waldorf education under the guidance of a loving teacher. The session includes a craft, a circle time, and a special story.

Winter and Summer School. Gecko Garden School offers an optional holiday program over the winter (January) and summer (June) holidays. These programs that have an overarching theme and specific topics that change each week. The programs are generally divided into two classes of 20 children each: Little Gecko for children 18 months to 3 years, and Gecko for children 3 to 6 years. Current students have the opportunity to enroll first, and remaining places are then opened to the community. Summer and Winter School dates are listed in the school calendar and detailed information about the programs is communicated prior to the relevant holiday periods.

1.6 Settling in at Gecko Garden School

Gecko Garden makes every effort to support the child as they begin school, and gently transition them to the new environment. Each child is paired with a teacher who is that child’s designated care-taker. Although all teachers care for all children at all times, this teacher will develop a special bond with the child, and may be the one the child feels the closest to in the event they need special support. Parents are encouraged to work with the Head Teacher to work out a strategy to support each child settling in. Provided there is space immediately available in the class, families are encouraged to do a free week-long trial period. For children who have not yet been exposed to English prior to starting school, they are supported in their native language if possible while learning.

2.0 School Organization

The successful functioning of Gecko Garden School depends upon the cooperative efforts of the adults who work together to create and sustain the school. This includes both the faculty and staff, and the parents who entrust their children to the school, and volunteer their time to create a healthy environment for the children. The three key leadership bodies are the College of Teachers, the School Director, and the Board of Trustees. These bodies work together to create, implement, and refine the vision and mission of the school.

Those who take up the responsibility of leadership roles in the school are guided by the principle of Servant Leadership. A Servant Leader facilitates participative decision-making and then delegates responsibility in the service of the vision and mission of the school. Servant Leadership is collaborative and builds trust.

2.1 College of Teachers

Gecko Garden’s College of Teachers is in development during the 2019-2020 school year. It is responsible for creating and deepening the pedagogy, and actualizing the vision and the mission of the school via curriculum development, teaching, mentoring, implementation of strategic planning and mission renewal. The College of Teachers works in collaboration with the Board of Trustees on the selection process of the School Director, and may review Board actions or decisions if they deem it necessary.

2.2 School Director

The School Director is responsible for ongoing management of school operations and resource development in service of the vision and mission of the school. The Director is responsible for implementing policies, plans and budgets approved by the Board of Trustees and College of Teachers. The Director also manages human resources, develops the school community, implements strategic plans, and facilitates and ensures the smooth day-to-day operations of the school. The Director serves on the College of Teachers and on the Board of Trustees. The Director carries the Board of Trustees’ legal and fiduciary responsibilities into the daily operations of the administration and faculty. The Director acts on behalf of the Board to ensure that the school carries out and adheres to the decisions of the Board, that it complies with all applicable laws and regulations, manages risk, adheres to and pursues its stated mission, and implements strategies and policies set by the Board. The School Director is supported by an Operations Manager and an Administration Assistant. Additionally, during this transition period the School Director will be supported by the temporary position of Deputy Director. This position will support the transition to Waldorf education, and provide coverage during the School Director’s maternity leave.

2.3 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the economic health of the school. The Board of Trustees keeps the vision and mission of the school in focus and oversees that the College of Teachers and School Director are accomplishing the school’s mission. The Board takes responsibility for the legal affairs, strategic planning, budget approval including fiscal oversight, and risk management oversight affairs of the school. The Board has oversight of the School Director. The Board of Trustees meets quarterly. Board meetings are open to the school community, and parents are welcome to attend. While the Board has an “open door” policy, certain confidential or sensitive information may need to be discussed in closed door sessions. The Board of Trustees consists of:

- ☞ 1 School Director
- ☞ 2 Teachers
- ☞ 2 Parents
- ☞ 1 School Shareholder
- ☞ 1 External Waldorf Education Professional
- ☞ 1 Tax and Legal Advisor

2.4 Legal Structure of the School

Gecko Garden School functions as a not-for-profit organization, with any profits being reinvested into the school. However, as parents pay school fees, it is not possible at present under Cambodian law for the school to register as a not-for-profit organization. As a result, the school is legally registered to three shareholders, who hold liability for the school. These shareholders are voluntarily legally liable for the actions of the school, with no compensation of any kind. The school takes its responsibility to protect them very seriously. One shareholder serves on the Board of Trustees in an advisory and risk management capacity. In 2019-2020 this structure is under review.

2.5 Class Parents

In order to make sure the teachers get the support from families that they need, and to foster social connection and understanding of what is happening in the classroom, each class has a designated Class Parent. The Class

Parent informally (usually at drop-off) touch base once per week with the Head Teacher to learn what is happening in the classroom, and communicate accordingly with the rest of the families. The Class Parent administers the class WhatsApp group with any class and school updates and announcements. As such the school will provide the Class Parent with a list of the names, phone numbers, and email addresses for all parents in their class. They also manage informal parent-donated class budgets (usually used for teachers' gifts), and help organize class field trips and projects. Parents not wishing to receive communications regarding the class are invited to mute notifications from the group, understanding that they take responsibility for any information they may miss as a result.

2.6 Committees and Clubs

The following groups and committees are expected to be retained or established during the coming year.

- ☞ **Gardening Club.** The Gardening Club will be responsible for creating and maintaining gardening initiatives.
- ☞ **Toy Making Club.** The Toy Making Club meetings twice per month, once on a weeknight and once on a Saturday morning, to create hand-made toys for the school classrooms as needed by the teachers.
- ☞ **Waldorf Transition Working Group.** This group is open to all members of the community, including teachers, parents and administrators. It will be responsible for continually understanding and gradually adopting elements of the Waldorf curriculum, management, and financial practices. It will: evaluate and amend existing administrative, legal, and financial structures and processes with the goal of improving efficiency, transparency and reporting; create a long-term business and transition plan for the school; lead social and cultural change within the school community; lead training and cultural change among the teachers; and evolve the school curriculum. The group reports quarterly to the Board of Trustees.
- ☞ **Financial Oversight Committee.** This committee will be responsible for budget reviews and controls, ensuring the financial health of the school.
- ☞ **Environmental Sustainability Committee.** This committee will conduct an environmental assessment of the school, and create short- and long-term plans for improving our school's sustainability practices and reducing our environmental impact, per our mission to create a community that values and stresses a strong connection to nature and natural practices, and our Environmental Policy.
- ☞ **Scholarship Committee.** This committee will be responsible for planning and implementing a scholarship program for Khmer students, including source of funds, number of scholarships, and admissions process.

2.7 Volunteers

Family involvement is central and essential to the health of our school community. Without the gifts of parents' time, energy and expertise, our school would not exist. In addition to serving on formal committees, there are a number of ways that parents can volunteer. Examples of ways parents can help include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☞ Make toys for the classrooms | ☞ Make a birthday cake for your teachers |
| ☞ Help with the school garden | ☞ Work shifts at events |
| ☞ Share knowledge of a craft, musical instrument, job skill, etc. | ☞ Support school marketing efforts |
| ☞ Share your stories, customs or holidays | ☞ Provide information and social connection for new families |
| ☞ Help with plays, sewing costumes, etc. | ☞ Help with campus maintenance |
| ☞ Host a potluck for your class | ☞ Bring back school supplies from trips abroad |

2.8 School Directory/Contact List

Key points of contact for the school are provided below.

Name	Role	Phone/WhatsApp	Email
Mary Velasco	School Director	017 877 198	director@geckogarden-preschool.org
Dina Robbins	Deputy/Interim Director	085 444 295	Dina.e.robbins@gmail.com
Sovanna Liv	Operations Manager	012 597 219	om@geckogarden-preschool.org
School Hotline	N/A	092 575 431	info@geckogarden-preschool.org

2.9 Organizational Learning, Planning and Restructuring

Gecko Garden School's management structure is transitioning to support a school of our size and repute, and to support the gradual adoption of the Waldorf curriculum. As such, the Waldorf Transition Working Group is evaluating existing administrative, legal, and financial structures and processes with the goal of improving efficiency, improving transparency and reporting, and creating a long-term business and transition plan. The Waldorf Transition Working Group is open to all members of the community, and reports quarterly to the Board of Trustees.

3.0 Communication Between School and Home

Gecko Garden School regularly communicates with parents. It is important that the school has up to date contact details for all parents so that information can be communicated in a timely manner. Please advise us of any changes to email addresses, telephone numbers, caregiver arrangements, emergency contact details and medical information to ensure our records remain up to date. We are conscious that most of us are inundated with information every day, and therefore try to limit the material we send out.

3.1 Parent-Teacher Evenings (Quarterly)

Every class holds four Parent-Teacher Evenings each year. At these meetings, the class Head Teacher and Teacher's Assistants will review the curriculum in light of child development and talk about classroom activities and the social life of the class. There is time for questions and discussion. Upcoming events and school information is announced. The dates for these evenings are posted in the school calendar. Parents are encouraged to make every effort to attend. Topics include:

- ↳ The curriculum that is being presented to the class,
- ↳ Developmental issues that come into play for children of that age,
- ↳ The social dynamics of the class,
- ↳ Plans for day trips or field trips
- ↳ Other class or school related issues

Parent evenings are also a time for parents to discuss general areas of concern and get support from other parents for the challenges of parenting a child of that age. Attending class meetings regularly is a wonderful way to deepen your connection with your child's school life. It also strengthens your connectedness with your child's teacher and with other parents in the school community.

3.2 Parent-Teacher Conferences (Biannual)

Parent-Teacher Conferences are conducted for all children in all classes biannually at the end of Term 2, and again at the end of Term 4. At the end of Term 2, the parents meet with the child's teachers to talk about their child's progress so far in the school year. At the end of Term 4, a written "learning story" which documents the child's growth and development throughout the school year is presented to the parents.

3.3 All-School Meeting (Annual)

Each year at the beginning of May the school holds an All-School Meeting. This is a very important meeting and at least one parent of each child enrolled in the school should attend. This meeting provides an opportunity for parents to hear from the College of Teachers, the School Director, and the Board of Trustees as they review the year's activities and preview the coming year. There is additional time allotted for questions and answers.

3.4 Weekly Updates

The school sends out most of its information to parents via electronic means, including newsletters, tuition and aftercare statements, requests for updating immunization information for students, and re-enrollment information. This information will also be posted on the bulletin board, so parents interested in receiving a paper copy may check there.

This Week at Gecko Garden is a brief weekly email providing a summary of the week's updates, and reminders for upcoming activities. In order to keep the volume of emails down, these summaries will provide a great deal of important information for the week following. It is recommended that parents read them regularly.

Bulletin and Chalk Boards are located on the watercolor wall above the parent tea and coffee station. Copies of the weekly newsletter, important notices, and the school calendar is posted on these boards.

Google Calendar Invitations. School events that invite parent participation are sent as Google Calendar invitations to the email address provided by the parents.

Direct Personal Communication. In the event of important events, the teachers will approach parents on drop-off and pick-up to remind them of the events. Also, notices for events are occasionally sent home for parents in their children's backpacks. If you wish to converse with your child's teacher on a matter concerning your child, the preferred way to contact a teacher is to approach them upon drop-off or pick-up. If they are not able to discuss in that moment due to supervisory responsibilities, they will schedule an alternate time to talk. If you are not able to find or address the teacher directly, the director can help establish a time for the conversation.

4.0 Parent Resources

Gecko Garden School continues to create programs and assemble resources to help parents wishing to deepen their understanding of Waldorf education, and/or to put more of it into practice at home.

4.1 Parent Education

Our school offers classes, information sessions and trainings whenever possible to support our teachers, parents and community in learning about Waldorf education. The weekly newsletter will announce events, volunteer opportunities and meetings for school and community programs and activities, including:

- ☞ The **Waldorf Education Study Group**, which meets bi-monthly. Topics and articles are determined by group interest and are announced a few weeks in advance. Visit the **Friends of Waldorf/Steiner Phnom Penh** Facebook page for the most recent dates and topics.

- ☞ The **Teacher Education Program** is ongoing and open to anyone in the greater Phnom Penh community interested in deepening their understanding and practical application of Waldorf education. Ask at the school office to get involved.

4.2 How You Can Support Waldorf Education at Home

Harmony between home and school is helpful for Waldorf education to be effective. Some simple ways you can bring Waldorf to your home are:

- ☞ **Establish family waking, sleeping and mealtime rhythms.** Rhythms and routines are of great importance in establishing a sense of security and trust for young children. In the home, these often include sleeping and waking routines, and regular meal times. Parents are encouraged to allow ample time for breakfast before coming to school, and establish a regular bedtime routine in the evening. This rhythm in a young child's life supports the work of the parents and teachers. Healthy rhythms in a nurturing environment help to build the foundations for future learning capacities.
- ☞ **Allow your child(ren) plenty of time to sleep.** The quality of a child's sleep affects his/her well-being during the day. At least twelve hours or more of sleep is recommended for the healthy physical, emotional and social development of children under the age of seven. Quiet time or a nap after lunch, and a consistent early bedtime of approximately 7:00 PM is recommended to promote your child's healthy growth and sense of well-being.
- ☞ **Reduce or eliminate the use of media and screen time in your household.** Research and our school's experience indicates that when media becomes a regular part of the life of a child below six or seven years old, it becomes embedded in the habit life, creating a dependence that will limit the child's freedom in the future. Childhood is a time to learn through activity, time in nature, playing creatively, and integrating socially. In short, through real life, real time experience of the world and all it has to offer. The quality of your child's experience in the Early Childhood classroom, and indeed, that of all the children in the class, depends on your commitment to creating a screen-free environment at home.
- ☞ **Create a warm and beautiful home environment for your child.** Where possible fill your home and your child's room with soft, natural and hand-made fabrics, objects and toys.
- ☞ **Support the children's classroom activities at home.** In the classroom, children develop social skills through creative play, their imagination through artistic activities and story-telling, and their motor skills through games, singing and movement. Encourage your child's natural creativity through these activities at home as well.
- ☞ **Cultivate relationships with other school families outside the school.** Children's social interactions may continue outside the school through play dates, birthday parties and family gatherings. Nurturing friendships among schoolmates and parents can create a strong sense of community, which supports the teacher's work in the classroom.

4.3 School Supplies

Gecko Garden School uses a number of high quality supplies which are typically used as part of Waldorf education to create a beautiful learning experience for the children. These include watercolor paints, natural bristle paint brushes, watercolor paper, wool roving, beeswax, block crayons, musical instruments, and other materials as well. The school periodically places orders for these materials. To obtain materials for your home use, stop by the office to pick up a copy of the supply order form and learn when the next order is expected to be placed.

4.4 Friends of Waldorf/Steiner Education Phnom Penh

Gecko Garden School is a founding member of the Friends of Waldorf/Steiner Education Phnom Penh group (Facebook: **Friends of Waldorf/Steiner Phnom Penh**). The group strives to create a home for conversation and support for individuals, families, and teachers interested in Waldorf education and related topics. The group hosts a study group twice monthly. For information on upcoming meetings and topics visit the group's Facebook page or ask at the school office.

4.5 Recommended Reading

Gecko Garden School is keeping a growing library of books on topics related to Waldorf education. Some books of particular note and interest to parents are featured below. Please stop by the office if you would like to read a copy of one of these books, or explore our other titles.

- ☞ You Are Your Child's First Teacher, by Rahima Baldwin
- ☞ Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out, by Jack Petrash
- ☞ Kindergarten With Your Three to Six Year Old, by Donna Simmons

4.6 Waldorf Resources on the Internet

There are a number of organizations that provide additional information on Waldorf education, and the expanding initiatives all around the world. A few to explore are:

- ☞ Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiner (Friends of Waldorf Education)
<https://www.freunde-waldorf.de/en/>
- ☞ International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE)
<http://www.iaswece.org/home/>
- ☞ Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)
www.whywaldorfworks.org
- ☞ LifeWays North America
<http://lifewaysnorthamerica.org/>

5.0 School Schedules

The school year runs from August to May and is divided into four terms. The school year, school months, festivals and the school days are intended to help the children feel a healthy part of the rhythms of nature, the community, the school community and their families. The school schedules and rhythms are designed to give the children a sense of order, predictability, safety and security.

5.1 School Calendar

The school calendar is provided as Attachment E to this document.

5.2 School Hours

The supervisory hours for the children are described in the following table. It is extremely important to the children that they are dropped off prior to their program start time, to ensure they start the day with their class and feel fully integrated in the day's rhythm and activities. Children dropped off earlier and/or picked up later than their program start and finish will be allowed supervised play time in the outdoor space. Please note that a \$5 fine will be applied for every 30 minutes a child is left at the school after the latest pick-up time.

Class Options	Drop-off	Program Start	Program Finish	Latest Pick-up
Preschool	As early as 7:45 AM	8:30 AM	11:15 AM	12:00 PM
Kindergarten		8:15 AM	11:30 AM	
Full Day Program		8:15 AM	2:15 PM	2:30 PM
Parent and Child Group	N/A	2:30 PM	4:30 PM	N/A

5.3 Arrival and Departure Procedures

Upon arrival at the school children are invited to play in the outdoor spaces and engage in any activities in progress. Please spray your child with a natural mosquito repellent and sunscreen prior to their arrival at school. Prior to departure parents are asked to collect all their children's belongings. All adults who pick up children must be registered with the office and wear a badge. This includes parents, grandparents, and nannies. Please visit the office to obtain badges. If an adult who does not have a badge attempts to pick up a child, the child will not be released and the parent will be called. Likewise, parents intending that their children should be picked up by a known member of the school community (e.g., their child will be picked up by their friend's mother to go to their home for lunch) should notify the school of their permission for the child to leave with that person on that day. If no permission has been given, the child will not be released and the parent will be called. If a parent or caregiver forgets their badge, they may sign in to the school visitors' book and be issued a visitors pass.

5.4 Attendance

If a child is sick or unable to attend school on a given day, please notify the school office via telephone at 092 575 431. Parents are also asked to notify staff in advance if children are expected to be away from school on holiday or for any reason. If a child has been absent for more than two days, and the parents or caregivers have not contacted the school, the Head Teacher will call to check on the student's welfare.

5.5 Class Rhythms

The school and class rhythms are intended to provide the children with a sense of order, predictability, safety and security. The daily rhythm follows this basic pattern:

8:15/8:30 AM	Daily activity, snack preparation, and free play
9:30 AM	Tidy up time
9:45 AM	Circle time
10:00 AM	Snack time
10:30 AM	Outside play
11:00 AM	Story
11:15/11:30 PM	Home time / Lunch

There is a weekly rhythm to the school snack and daily activity. Here is a sample of a weekly rhythm in a Kindergarten Class.

Day of the week	Activity	Snack
Monday	Watercolor painting	Rice and beans with sautéed garlic, onion, ginger and soy sauce
Tuesday	Handwork or Crafts	Vegetable soup
Wednesday	Preparing bread	Fresh bread and butter
Thursday	Beeswax modelling	Fruit crumble
Friday	Drawing	Oatmeal with nuts and dried fruit

5.6 Holidays and Festivals

Gecko Garden School is grateful to be able to acknowledge and share a variety of customs and cultural celebrations representing our Khmer home, our diverse international community, and the rest of the world. Festivals mark the rhythm of the year for our students, celebrating the seasons and incorporating central human values and virtues. The festivals are brought into the classroom through story, song, movement, drama and decoration. Some of the festivals are celebrated by the school internal to the classrooms, and some are celebrated as family events with the whole school community. We heartily urge everyone's participation, as parent involvement helps to make the festivals meaningful and special. The school calendar, which is published weekly in the email updates, announces the dates and times of celebrations. Other festivals are observed with events and/or assemblies during school hours.

6.0 Enrollment and Financial Policies

Gecko Garden School's enrollment information and financial policies are explained in the following sections. Detailed Admissions Policies are recorded in a separate document available on our website, or at the office.

6.1 School Tours

School tours are given to prospective and current families by appointment from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The tours include an introduction to the child's potential classroom teacher, and allow adequate time for questions and answers. The tours are scheduled for early school hours to allow the parents to get a sense of the whole school community at drop-off, and so as to allow access to view the classrooms without disturbing the children's play during the day. To maintain the daily rhythm, families who are more than 15 minutes late for their tour will be called by the office and invited to reschedule.

6.2 Enrollment Meeting

New families will be asked to meet with the school director and their child's teacher prior to enrolling. This meeting will help the teachers and school better understand the child, their home environment, and how to support them. It is also an opportunity for families to learn more about the school, and ask questions.

6.3 Trial Week

Provided there is space immediately available in the class, families are encouraged to do a free week-long trial period, to connect to the teachers and the school prior to registration.

6.4 Registration Fee

For new students, a one-time Registration Fee must be paid to secure a child's place at Gecko Garden School. If the registration fee has not been paid, the child cannot start school.

6.5 Annual Capital Fee

Each year, all students must pay an Annual Capital Fee, which contributes directly to the upkeep of the school building, grounds and toys. For new students, the Annual Capital Fee must be paid within two weeks of the child beginning at Gecko Garden School. The fee will be prorated by number of terms attended if the child begins later in the year. For example, if a child begins in Term 2 and attends for three terms, the family would pay 75% of the Annual Capital Fee. No refunds are given on the fee if a family leaves the school prior to the end of the year. Re-enrolling families must pay the Annual Capital Fee at the end of the year prior to secure their child's place for the following school year. There is a late payment fee of \$20 for every week that the Annual Capital Fee is overdue. For returning students, the Capital Fee for the upcoming school year must be paid before the end of the current school year.

6.6 Tuition Payment

Gecko Garden School runs from August to June and is divided into four terms. The quarterly term fees are due on the first day of the new term. There is a late payment fee of \$30 for every week that term fees are overdue. If the term fee and the capital fee have not been paid by the end of the fourth week of term, the child will no longer be allowed to attend school and his or her place will be given to a child on the waiting list. In the event a family intends to leave the school, the school must be notified in writing two weeks prior to the start of the term, to allow time to offer the place to the waiting list. If the school is not notified two weeks in advance, the family will be responsible for 50% of tuition for the term.

6.7 School Fees

Gecko Garden School strives to make its special approach to education as accessible to students from a variety of economic and international backgrounds. The fees for the 2019-2020 school year are provided below. Any changes made to the fees during the school year will be communicated to parents well in advance. Families who have more than one child enrolled at Gecko Garden School receive a 5% discount on term fees for subsequent children.

Class	Preschool (18 months to 3 years old)	Kindergarten (3 years to 6 years old)
Half Day Tuition	USD 700 per term (USD 2,800 per year)	USD 830 per term (USD 3,320 per year)
Full Day Tuition <i>(includes lunch)</i>	USD 1,120 per term (USD 4,480 per year)	USD 1,220 per term (USD 4,880 per year)
Winter School	\$70 per session	
Summer School	\$70 per session	
Parent and Child	\$100 per term (\$400 per year)	
Annual Capital Fee	\$440 per student, paid annually	
Registration Fee	\$495 per new student, paid one time, at enrolment	

6.8 Early and Medical Withdrawal

All tuition and school fees are non-refundable. If a child leaves partway through the term, the family will forfeit the remainder of the fee for that term. If a child is to depart the school, the school should be notified in writing at least two weeks in advance of the start of the term, to allow the school to offer the child's place to the waiting list. If the school is not notified two weeks in advance, the family will be responsible for 50% of tuition for the term. Where – for unexpected reasons beyond the control of the family, such as in the event of illness – a child attends Gecko Garden School for four or fewer weeks of any term, the family may submit a written request for a pro-rate of 50% of that term's fees. This request is at the discretion of the School Director will only be considered one time per year per student. For extended absences during subsequent terms the fees must be paid in full to reserve the space for the child or the child can withdraw from the class and be placed at the top of the waitlist, at no cost, to be offered a space in the class as spaces become available

6.9 Waiting List

Every effort is made to accommodate all children in an appropriate class, but class size is capped at 20 students to ensure a positive learning experience. A waiting list is maintained, and families will be notified as places become

available. The siblings of existing pupils are given priority. Other places are granted primarily based on the order in which registrations are received. Gecko Garden School does accept children mid-term if vacancies arise.

6.10 Change of Program

Families who would like to change their child's program from full day to half day must inform the school's office in writing no later than two weeks before the first day of the new term. If the change is not communicated at least two weeks in advance, the family will be responsible for paying full day tuition for that term.

6.11 General Admission

Gecko Garden School accepts applications for children of all nationalities from the ages of 18 months to 6 years old as at 15 September of their admission year. If a child is at the top of the waitlist but is not yet 18 months by 15 September, the family can either (1) reserve a space for the child for when they turn 18 months by paying the full registration fee in advance and the full annual capital fee at the time of commencement; or (2) remain at the top of the waitlist and be offered a space in the class as spaces become available once the child is 18 months of age. Upon commencement the family will pay the full registration fee and a pro-rated capital fee.

Admission to all classes is based primarily on the order in which applications are received. Preference is given, however, to:

- ☞ Maintaining cultural diversity by ensuring the total number of children from any one nationality will be no more than 30% per class. Please see the Cultural Diversity Policy.
- ☞ Families who are passionate about Waldorf education and can commit to being active in the school community. This is to help our community to continue to grow and deepen our understanding of and commitment to Waldorf education.
- ☞ Children who currently have siblings enrolled at the school.

6.12 Deferred Admission Policy

The school recognizes that occasionally families face situations in which deferred enrolment for newly admitted students, or an extended absence for existing students, may be required. In these instances, families have two choices: (1) return to the top of the waitlist, at no additional cost, and be offered a space in the class as spaces become available; or (2) pay a holding fee of 50% of the regular term fee for each term that is missed in order to guarantee a space for their child at their desired commencement date. At any given time there can be at most two places per class reserved in this manner. Further, if a student will be absent for more than five weeks of any term, the family can pay 50% of the regular term fee, with prior agreements from the School Director.

6.13 Cultural Diversity Policy

Gecko Garden School is an international school with an intent and mission to maintain a rich cultural diversity in its community. In 2014, the school's Parent Management Group, teachers and parents worked together to create a plan for maintaining the school's rich cultural diversity. They established the policy that the total number of children from any one nationality will be no more than 30% per class. It was agreed that this system, based on nationality (rather than linguistic background) was the most fair and transparent to administer. The policy is that:

- ☞ The total number of children from any one nationality will be no more than 30% per class.
- ☞ Up to two nationalities may be identified on the enrollment form. These will be used to determine the child's nationality. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider the child's nationality to be different from that stated in their passport (e.g., a child is adopted). In these situations the School Director, together with the parents, has discretion to determine which nationality is most appropriate to reflect the child's family situation.

- ☞ If a space becomes available on the waitlist in a class that already has 30% representation from one nationality, priority will be given to filling that space with the next child on the waitlist who has a different nationality which is not yet represented at 30% of the class.
- ☞ If the only children on the wait list are from a nationality that already has 30% representation in the class and a space becomes available, the School Director will discuss the situation with the Head Teacher of that class, the Office Manager, and the Finance Committee to determine the implications of temporarily increasing the quota. Each case must be considered on an individual basis and will not lead to precedent.

7.0 Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures

Gecko Garden School has a number of policies established to keep our children and community safe and to enable us to offer a unique form of education.

7.1 Behavior and Discipline

Gecko Garden School maintains a safe, harmonious and respectful environment where children feel protected and free to play and learn. To a large extent our school and teachers prevent challenging behavior by:

- ☞ Providing a predictable environment that is anchored by a strong rhythm of daily activities, which decreases stress for the children by allowing them to feel safe, secure and confidently self-sufficient.
- ☞ Modeling positive social interactions based on respect and caring for each individual. As small children learn primarily through imitation, surrounding them with an atmosphere of warmth and inclusion, while modeling politeness and courtesy, creates an environment that fosters healthy social interaction.
- ☞ Observing that a child could benefit from some quiet time or by engaging in a different activity, and facilitating an activity such as playing in a quieter place or looking at a book, that will help soothe, calm and redirect the child.
- ☞ Assisting children when there are interpersonal challenges with firm and loving adult intervention. Teachers strive to establish clear guidelines for children's behavior, based on developmentally appropriate expectations, and implement them consistently through activity and imagination.

Teachers do intervene when appropriate to bring aggrieved parties together after calming and consoling them as needed, and to help the children begin to learn to listen to and care for each other without the necessity of assigning blame. They also use positive reinforcement and redirection. Please do not hesitate to speak with your child's teacher if you have any questions about social interactions in the class. More serious or recurring problems will be addressed with the help of the parents and school Director.

7.2 Technology and Screen-Time Guidelines

The noticeable effects of screen-usage on children, especially television, DVDs, computers, and hand-held devices (including cell phones, tablets, and video games) include shortened attention span, reduced perseverance, and inability to concentrate and play. This article does a good job of explaining further: "W.H.O. Says Limited or No Screen Time for Children Under 5." At school, these weaken the child's capacity to learn and can also disrupt the class group's social life. In order to nurture healthy development, cultivate your child's imagination, and reinforce the work that is done in our school, we strongly recommend that children watch no television, videos or movies, or play video or computer games. We are aware that it can be hard to change electronic media habits, and the school will support in any way possible. Please speak to the school director for more information and to learn how to get assistance. Our "Tips for Reducing Your Child's Screen Time" document describes some of our recommendations your family could consider.

7.3 Snack

All children have morning snack time. A nutritious snack that the children help to prepare is provided. Snack is provided in adequate quantities that additional food will not be required. Supplemental fruits such as apples are also available should they be required. Parents are asked not to send additional snacks to school. Plentiful filtered

drinking water is provided for all children during the day. Please note that additional food, especially sugary drinks, fruit juices, soda, candy, sweets, and chocolate, should not be brought to school. If such foods are brought to school, they will be held in the refrigerator until the end of the day, and then sent home.

7.4 What to Bring to School

Please check your child's backpack each day and ensure they have a complete change of clothes, diapers and wipes (if applicable), mosquito spray, sunscreen, a hat, and interesting items from nature to share (if desired).

7.5 What to Leave at Home

Please limit the toys, purses, jewelry, snacks, water bottles, milk bottles, watches, games, books, etc. that your child brings to school. Such items cause difficult social interactions between children and are often lost or broken. As an alternative, we suggest children may like to bring interesting items from nature to share.

7.6 Lunch

Children will be fed nutritious, home cooked lunches, provided by the school as part of the tuition fee. Children with special dietary considerations will be accommodated, as it is important that all children eat the same food. This is to encourage all children to develop a taste for healthy food, without the distractions of alternative food. If a child does bring food from home, the food will be kept in the refrigerator and may be picked up at the day's end. Plenty of water is provided in reusable cups, so children are asked not to bring water bottles.

7.7 Birthdays

In the preschool and kindergarten classrooms birthdays are very special days. Parents are invited to come to the classroom to celebrate their child's birthday. Parents are asked to bring a simple cake with minimal sugar, which will be served to the children for snack that day. Please talk to your child's teacher one week in advance of your child's birthday to plan your classroom visit and ensure the day is special for your child.

7.8 Visitor Policy

All other visitors to the school are also required to sign-in and will be issued with temporary visitors passes. Visitors must proceed directly to the office, and be accompanied by a teacher or other staff member for the duration of their visit to the school. We prioritize the security of our school, staff and students and strictly enforce this requirement for passes to be worn.

7.9 Clothing for School

The best clothes for school are simple, sturdy play clothing made of cotton and other natural fibers. Please send your child in sturdy shoes that are suitable for active outdoor play. We recommend that your child wears simple clothes with no potentially distracting graphics.

7.10 Lost and Found

To the best of our teachers' ability, lost items known to belong to specific children are returned to them directly following discovery. However, a basket of lost and found items is kept in the office. Please check the basket if something has gone missing.

7.11 Photography and Videotaping of Students

All parents when signing an enrollment contract for their children – and all adults who sign an employment contractor with Gecko Garden School – agree to let employees and authorized photographers of Gecko Garden School photograph or film students, faculty and staff for use in school-related communications, and informal sharing among the parent body. No imagery or other representations based on photographs, video or student

artworks will be shared, sold, or leased to third party vendors. If a family or individual does not wish to grant Gecko Garden School the permission to photograph or reproduce imagery of their child(ren), the “Opt-Out from Photography Permission Form” is available in the office. These signed forms must be received before September 1st of that same academic year to ensure compliance for the remainder of the academic year.

7.12 School Photos

Once per year in Term 2 a professional photographer comes to our school and makes individual photos of each child, and group photos of each class. Parents are given the option of purchasing the photos directly from the photographer. The photos are used for no other purpose. Advance notice and additional information for school photos will be provided in the newsletter.

7.13 Health and Safety

Gecko Garden School takes very seriously the health and wellbeing of all our students and we ask all parents to complete a Medical Form prior to your child commencing at our school so we have a full and clear picture of your child’s medical needs. If your child suffers from any allergies we will work closely with you to understand your child’s situation, necessary precautions and protocols. Gecko Garden School is strictly a nut-free zone.

7.13.1 Vaccination Policy

In 2017 Gecko Garden School implemented a health vaccination policy that all new children enrolled after July 2017 are required to provide some form of documentary evidence or certificates of vaccination for the following illnesses: Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP), Measles, Mumps and Rubella. It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure their child’s vaccinations and the records are up to date.

7.13.2 Medications

Although all teaching staff undertake First Aid Training every year, staff are not permitted to administer medication to children except in emergency circumstances (for example, where the child has a severe food allergy). Please make arrangements for medication to be administered to your child outside of school hours or a caretaker can visit the school to administer medication if required. If a child requires emergency medications as part of a preexisting medical condition the ability of the school to meet their needs will be considered on an individual basis. Please discuss the child’s condition, the medication indications and staff training requirements with the school director.

7.13.3 Illnesses

When a child starts attending school they naturally become exposed to germs that may result in cases of childhood illnesses such as the common cold. This is normal and will help your child to build a strong immune system. However, when your child is not feeling well and is clearly sick, please keep him/her home to avoid spreading germs. The following lists some of the most common illnesses and provides guidelines for when the child may return to school, unless otherwise approved by a registered medical professional. If a child displays the symptoms of one of these conditions while at school, parents will be contacted and asked to collect their child.

Common Illnesses	Guideline for When a Child May Return to School
Chicken Pox	The child may return when all lesions are crusted over, usually 10-14 days after onset.
Cold Sore	The child may return once the sore heals.
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	The child may return when the eye is treated and no longer producing discharge.
Diarrhea	The child may return when there has been no diarrhea within the previous 24 hours that cannot be contained by nappies or regular toilet visits.
Ear Infection	The child may return after treatment is initiated, their temperature is normal and they are pain free.

Fever	The child may return when their temperature has been below 99°F/37.5°C for 24 hours without antipyretic treatment (e.g. Paracetamol/Panadol/Tylenol).
Hand, Foot and Mouth	The child may return when the blisters are healed over and they are no longer contagious, usually 7 days after onset.
Impetigo (School Sores)	The child may return after 24 hours of antibiotic therapy. Sores should be covered with watertight dressings.
Influenza	The child may return when they feel well, have a temperature below 99°F/37.5°C, and symptoms such as runny nose, sore throat, cough, and aches have ceased.
Parasites	Scabies: The child may return after treatment is completed. Head Lice: The child may return after first treatment. Pinworms: The child may return after treatment and once cleared by a registered doctor.
Rashes	The child may return when a physician determines whether the rash is infectious, and after it goes away.
Strep Throat	The child may return when their temperature has been below 99°F/37.5°C for 24 hours without antipyretic treatment and after a minimum of 24 hours of antibiotics.
Whooping Cough	The child may return after a minimum of 5 days of antibiotic treatment.

7.13.4 Safety and Preparedness

We consider the protection and safety of all children to be of the utmost importance and provide our staff with regular refresher training on child protection matters. A fully equipped First Aid kit is kept on the premises and all teaching staff have current First Aid qualifications. If a child is injured at school, teachers will assess the injury and determine its seriousness. Minor injuries will be treated in accordance with standard first aid procedures. If an injury is more serious the parents will be notified immediately and, if necessary, treatment will be sought from the family's preferred medical professional as stated on their enrollment form.

Routine safety drills are conducted each semester so that staff members are well training and prepared to respond in the event of an actual emergency. These drills also provide an opportunity for children to follow their teacher's safety instructions and to practice how to exit the classroom quickly but safely.

7.14 Complaints and Problem Resolution Policy

From time to time, situations may arise where parents have a question or concern relating to their child's classroom or Gecko Garden School more generally. We encourage parents to raise any questions or concerns about their child's classroom directly with their class teacher in the first instance. If the matter cannot be resolved or further information/action is required, the matter will be escalated to the Director for response.

If the question or concern relates to the running of Gecko Garden School it should be raised with the Director either verbally or in writing. The matter may then be escalated to the Board of Trustees for resolution. Any question or concern raised under this provision, including the name of the parent and/or child involved, is deemed to be confidential information.

7.15 Child Protection Policy

Gecko Garden School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in our care. We expect all members of our community, including staff and families, to share this commitment. All children, regardless of age, special needs or disability, racial/cultural heritage, religious belief or sexual orientation have the right to be protected from all types of harm and abuse.

We are committed to nurturing a culture where safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and where it is understood that safeguarding is not just about protecting children from deliberate harm, but relates to many aspects of school life. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all staff should make sure their approach is child-centered. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. (Source: Keeping Children Safe in Education. 2018)

If a member of staff is concerned about a child's welfare, or a pupil discloses to a staff member, he/she will immediately raise their concern to the School Director. The School Director will act in accordance with the school's full Child Protection Policy, available on our website or from the office.

We endeavor to support the welfare and safety of children and young people in our care through:

- ☞ Maintaining children's welfare as our paramount concern
- ☞ Ensuring the content of the curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning
- ☞ Ensuring that child protection is included in the curriculum to help children stay safe, recognize when they don't feel safe and identify who they can talk to
- ☞ Providing suitable support and guidance so that children and their families have a range of appropriate adults to approach if they are concerned
- ☞ Promoting a positive, supportive, neutral and secure environment where children can develop a sense of being valued and heard in their own right
- ☞ Ensuring all steps are taken to maintain site security and children's physical safety
- ☞ Working with parents to build an understanding of the school's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children
- ☞ Ensuring all staff are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what to do if they have a concern about a child
- ☞ Monitoring pupils who have been identified as having welfare or protection concerns and keeping confidential records which are stored securely

7.16 Environmental Policy

Gecko Garden School is committed to environmental stewardship and natural practices within the school, and supporting its families and communities in their efforts as well. In 2019 the school is undertaking an environmental assessment in support of its mission to **"create a community that values and stresses a strong connection to nature and natural practices within its urban environment."** The environmental assessment will identify short- and long-term things the school can undertake to lessen its environmental impact and instill these values and priorities in our children. In response to the assessment, the school will create a plan to systematically address issues as it is able, to create as natural and environmentally friendly a community as possible. Gecko Garden School seeks to encourage environmental awareness and responsibility in the daily life of the school, and upholds the following goals:

- ☞ To make Gecko Garden School a more sustainable community that meets its needs by moving away from actions that degrade the planet's life support systems and resources while moving toward actions that sustain and restore those systems and resources.
- ☞ To employ practices that limit intake of resources and output of waste and lessen environmental impact.
- ☞ To raise the level of ecological literacy and environmental activity of the community in both curricular and extracurricular life.
- ☞ To offer only programs and events that honor our commitment to natural materials.
- ☞ To teach our children not just how to reduce and reuse harmful materials, but how to successfully live without them in an increasingly reliant society.

8.0 Teacher Education Program

Gecko Garden School perpetually supports its teachers in training and self-improvement. The school is currently very actively engaging Waldorf education mentors from all over the world to come to Phnom Penh and offer training to our teachers. Additionally, we are offering in-house training to our teachers on a nearly weekly basis. Parents and interested members of the public are encouraged to participate in all training as well. Training programs will be announced in the newsletter when information becomes available.

9.0 Support for Waldorf Education Initiatives and Homeschoolers in Cambodia

Gecko Garden School is committed to supporting all Waldorf/Steiner initiatives in Cambodia to the extent that it can. The school will support those wishing to homeschool their children of any age with participation in school festivals; curriculum assistance; advice on incorporation of Khmer cultural elements into homeschool curriculums; obtaining appropriate school supplies; access to all trainings offered at the school; play date connections; study group participation; and other support if required and possible.

In the event that a family wishes to establish a primary grade-level homeschool initiative, the school will make every reasonable effort to support them on its campus if desired by the family. The school will also offer all reasonable support, including advice, mentorship, and access to resources and supplies, to other Waldorf initiatives in Cambodia who seek assistance.

10.0 Attachments to the School Handbook

The School Handbook incorporates by reference the following attachments, which are available on our website or by request at the school office.

- ☞ Attachment 1: Child Protection Policy
- ☞ Attachment 2: Reading Instruction in Kindergarten: Little to Gain and Much to Lose
- ☞ Attachment 3: W.H.O. Says Limited or No Screen Time for Children Under 5
- ☞ Attachment 4: Tips for Reducing Your Child's Screen Time
- ☞ Attachment 5: School Calendar for the 2019-2020 School Year