



CHARLOTTE MASON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Parent Handbook

“Our aim in education is to give children vital interests in as many directions as possible - to set their feet in a large room...”

Charlotte Mason, School Education

Our Mission: To provide a Christian liberal arts education that fosters the development of great minds and wide interests while nurturing each child's relationship to God and the world He created.

Welcome to Charlotte Mason Community School. We are thankful that you have chosen CMCS as the place where you want your child to be educated. We believe that parents are the first educators of their children, and for that reason, we hope to work closely with you during the school year to make the best possible environment for your child.

Charlotte Mason's philosophy was, and is as we bring it to you today, one of respect for children and parents. Charlotte Mason Community School exists to cultivate and promote a program of education designed to help parents give their children the best schooling possible - one that fosters the development of great minds and wide interests, while nurturing each child's relationship to God and the world He created.

Charlotte Mason Community School takes its name from British educator, Charlotte Mason. Miss Mason developed the House of Education, a teaching college in Ambleside, England, which later became part of the University of Lancashire; the Parent's National Educational Union, a work given to the strengthening of parents as a child's early teachers; the Parent's Union School, a correspondence school formed with that work in mind; and Fairfield, a practice school for implementing her philosophy and giving practical experience to student teachers.

The unique philosophy of Charlotte Mason enables us to offer time for outdoor play, nature study, and the arts, in addition to basic subjects. Families are encouraged to apply Charlotte Mason's methods in their home lives by valuing time together, reading aloud, and giving children time to grow up.

Essential values:

1. Children are born persons. All children are treated with respect at Charlotte Mason Community School.
2. Teachers and all those in a position of authority at Charlotte Mason will demonstrate a life-transforming Christian faith and a commitment to a local church.
3. Parents are the first educators of children and are expected to work in partnership with the teachers and staff of Charlotte Mason. Parents have an integral role in the life of the school.
4. Charlotte Mason Community School is here to serve the Detroit community. Its student body will be racially, socially, and ethnically diverse. Students from non-Christian families are welcome.
5. Because we believe that God is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of life, we use the firm foundation of God's Word, teaching children to make decisions and to live according to its principles. God's nature is expressed in the person of Jesus Christ and in the world He created.
6. The teachers and administration of Charlotte Mason Community School will reflect the love of God by living in an atmosphere of love, kindness, orderliness, and joy.

Charlotte Mason Community School provides equal opportunity to all applicants without regard to race, gender, religious affiliation, or national origin.

Explanation of Educational Philosophy

Charlotte Mason Community School is a place where students can flourish as they develop a love of learning in an atmosphere that nurtures each child's relationship to God and the world He created.

The school embraces the educational philosophies of the early 20th century British educator, Charlotte Mason. She believed that educators needed to see each child as a person with unique gifts and abilities from God. These gifts could best be cultivated through a broad, yet challenging curriculum.

Therefore, Charlotte Mason Community School strives to provide children with an education that fosters the development of great minds and wide interests. Particular attention is given to helping students develop lifelong habits and personal discipline so that they may achieve in any sphere.

Charlotte Mason Community School aims to provide a Christian liberal arts education in an atmosphere where God is seen as the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of mankind. To enhance the spiritual life of the children, each school day includes Bible readings. Students meet for worship once a week as a whole school.

The variety of God's creation is clearly displayed in the people of Detroit. Charlotte Mason plans to reflect this diversity in both student population, staff, and curriculum. In this way, students can celebrate the many people groups God has created.

Academic Program

The curriculum reflects high standards in traditional academic studies in an affirming, non-competitive atmosphere. The core subjects are listed below:

- Language Arts and Literature
- Science and Mathematics
- History and Geography
- Music and Fine Arts
- Spanish
- Nature Study

❖ To foster the development of great minds, we will encourage children to:

1. Think independently
 - Discern ideas
 - Ask questions
 - Draw conclusions
2. Value "living books" - well-written books on any subject that inspire ideas and interest in the reader

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Some of the essentials of the educational approach we employ include:

Narration

Narration is a teaching method designed to train students to focus, increase reading comprehension, build vocabulary, and develop both oral and written communication skills. For example, a student reads or listens to a reading, then restates orally, in writing, or in drama what she has learned. A student learns to absorb all of the information given because she has to restate all of what was read in her own words. The skills developed over time are far-reaching since the child is not just filling in the blanks.

Living Books/Whole Books

Living books are not dull, dry textbooks, but rather classics, world literature and history books where places and events come alive as you read them. Whenever possible, we read whole books, looking at the entirety of what the author wrote, not simply a chapter in an anthology.

- ❖ To foster the development of wide interests, we will:
 1. Provide a broad curriculum of basic subjects but which also includes:
 - Nature study
 - Outdoor activities
 - Physical fitness
 - Art
 - Music
 - Handwork
 2. Provide a rich learning environment
 3. Encourage interest in the world and its people
 4. Encourage development of individual gifts and abilities
 5. Encourage a lifelong quest for knowledge

Nature Notebooks

Nature notebooks are artist sketchbooks containing pictures the children have drawn of plants, wildlife, or other natural objects found in their natural settings. These journals can also include nature-related poetry, prose, detailed descriptions, weather notes, Latin names and other such information. Children develop their journals as they are helped to see that nature exists all around them.

Outdoor Activities

In addition to weekly nature walks, Ms. Mason also recommended that children spend large quantities of time outside each day in every season. This helps to stimulate the brain and to build strong, healthy bodies.

Afternoon Classes

Students in the first through eighth grades finish daily academics in the morning, allowing the afternoon hours for free time to pursue crafts, music, art, Spanish, and other activities.

Composer Study

Each semester, students study a musical composer. They learn about the life of the composer and his or her music. They also learn about the form of the music. They listen to the themes, identify musical instruments, and learn musical terms. Their appreciation of music grows through listening to it. Composers from a wide range of backgrounds are chosen for study.

Picture Study

Every term each class studies an artist and his or her work. The children study several pictures by the artist and learn to pay close attention to details and to identify works by that artist. Artists of many different backgrounds and styles are chosen for study.

- ❖ To nurture the development of each child's relationship to God and to instill strong moral character, a strong will, and an educated conscience, we will:
 - Acknowledge God as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and source of knowledge
 - Expose them to:
 - The Word of God
 - Biblical teaching
 - Great Christian writers
 - Our own attempts to live in relationship with God

Bible Reading and Worship

Each day, teachers and students read a passage of Scripture and have time to pray. One morning a week the entire school participates in worship. Students are involved in the planning and the leading of worship time.

- ❖ To nurture each child's relationship to the world, we will:
 - Value the many ethnic and racial heritages given us by God
 - Value parents as ultimately entrusted with the education of their children
 - Value parents as important to the life of the school
 - Encourage habits of attention, thoroughness, and neatness
 - Encourage respect, concern, and compassion for others

Appreciation of Cultures

Students learn about other cultures as part of history, geography, and language classes. Activities might include learning about the music, art, and literature of other cultures, sharing in ethnic food, and inviting speakers from other countries to give presentations. The more exposure children have to other cultures, the more they can appreciate and understand others.

Habits

Ms. Mason believed that a quality education reinforced and even helped to develop good habits in children so that they would have smoother travel “on the rails of life.” Giving care and best effort to one’s projects, neatness, punctuality, and paying attention are a few habits that facilitate that smoother travel. These and other habits are reinforced through gentle correction and literature that inspires children to develop discipline on their own.

Serving

Students take part in activities to show compassion for the people in their families, neighborhood, community, nation, and the greater world. These will include visits to nursing homes, senior citizens’ apartments, sending needed items to missionaries, and sending cards to fellow students.

Class Composition

Grades K, 1, 2, 3, and 6 are single-grade classrooms. Grades 4, 5, 7, and 8 are multi-grade classrooms. Maximum class size is twelve students.

Policies and Procedures

School Hours

The school day begins promptly at 8:10 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. In order to provide the best possible learning experience for your children, please make sure that they arrive with ample time to organize books and supplies, and be in their seats by 8:30 a.m. It is very important that you pick up your child promptly at the end of the day.

Tardiness and Absences

Regular attendance at school contributes to a child's success in her studies. Frequent and prolonged absences cause a child to fall behind in her studies and to experience disconnection from class activities, which can be unsettling to the child. Please make every effort to schedule appointments and vacations for non-school hours. **If your child must be absent due to an appointment or illness, please call the school office as soon as possible.**

Children who arrive late frequently are at a disadvantage, because they have not had time to prepare their materials or mix socially with the other children before school. In addition, students entering the classroom late disrupt the activity of the rest of the class, which causes the late students to feel awkward about entering the room. **If your child must be late for some reason, please call the school office by 8:05 a.m.**

After School Pick-up

Students are released to parents or designated persons only. Upon registration or during the year, parents can file a release form in the school office. This form gives permission for persons other than parents to pick up their children. Parents can also revoke pick up rights with this form. The rights of another parent cannot be revoked without a custody document on file with the school stating that the parent has sole custody.

At the end of the school day, children who are left because their parents are late often feel upset and anxious. Please consider your children's feelings and needs in this area. Also, remember that teachers and staff have families and obligations as well.

Students will be dismissed to the playground at 3:00 pm. **If you are going to be late, please call the office before 3:00 PM.**

Parents may enter the parking lot via Trumbull, park their car in a parking space, and find their child on the playground. Parents are welcome and invited to stay and visit with other parents while children play after school. However, please be on time to pick up your children so that staff members may be released.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedure

In order to minimize confusion and maximize safety, the driveway between the historic sanctuary and the school is the drop-off zone. If you need to come into the school, please park in the parking lot.

Enter the church parking lot from Trumbull and proceed through the driveway toward Warren. Once you are in the driveway, your child may walk from your car to the front door of the school. A staff member will be at the door to greet your child at 8:10 am.

Students will be dismissed to the playground at 3:00. Please plan to park your car on Trumbull or in the school parking lot and come to the playground to pick up your child. Please be courteous to others during dismissal and do not block the driveway. We encourage parents to stay and visit with other parents during dismissal, while children play. However, parents are responsible for their children at 3:00. As a courtesy, school staff members will monitor children until 3:15.

Repeated tardiness either in the mornings or after school may impact a family's tuition assistance and fees may be incurred.

**** Please do not drop off your children in front of the school on West Warren Avenue.***

School Supplies

In an effort to keep costs down for parents, CMCS provides as many school supplies as possible for children to use during school hours. Each grade does have its own small list of needed supplies created by teachers.

Snacks and Lunches

Parents provide lunches and snacks for their children. In order to promote healthy lifestyles, we recommend that you discuss with your child the choices available for lunch and snack. Choose foods that promote good health. We recommend that you read with your child the ingredients listed in the food you put in her lunch, and be aware of the nutritional content of each item. **Please send water only to drink.** Students do not have access to microwaves or refrigerators, so please only send food that can be stored and eaten at room temperature.

Birthdays

Families may send in a birthday treat to share with their child's class. Please coordinate with your child's teacher to find out what day and time is best and if there are any dietary restrictions in the classroom.

Outside Fundraisers

If students have items to sell for another organization, they should arrange sales with other students outside of school. This will enable parents to oversee these sales and will relieve CMCS staff from any responsibility for the transactions.

Discipline Policy

It is the goal of Charlotte Mason School that every child develops habits of obedience, attention, cooperation, and respect in the classroom. We have developed the school-wide use of Howard Glasser's Nurtured Heart approach to teaching, as set forth in *The Inner Wealth Initiative*.

This approach is based on what Mr. Glasser calls a 3-legged table:

- **clear and consistently enforced rules**
- **no energy given to negative behavior**
- **much energy given to positive behavior**

This means that children know the rules. If they break a rule, such as not paying attention or being mildly disruptive during class time, the teacher gives the student a very brief reset time (ex. 30 seconds or so of putting his head down), then the child is brought back into activity with the rest of the class. This is done without explanation or lecture – no energy to negative behavior. The idea is that the student knows the rules, knows he is breaking a rule, and needs to take a moment to think about it and reset his priorities and actions.

If the problem is not corrected using these methods, the teacher will inform the principal and/or the child's parents. The teacher will work closely with them to help the child become successful in the classroom.

CMCS will not tolerate any physical or verbal abuse or bullying. We desire a school community in which all CMCS students feel welcome, respected, and safe. Staff members are committed to listening to students and guiding them through conflict in order to facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation. Staff members are also committed to thinking through the appropriate consequence in each unique situation. Our goal is the holistic growth of each child.

Staff members will communicate with parents, as needed, to ensure a strong home-school relationship for the benefit of each student.

Throughout each day teachers look for ways to acknowledge good behavior in students – energy to positive behavior. This is done by praising even the smallest effort and tying it to a character trait, such as “I noticed how you followed through and finished that assignment, even though it was difficult for you. That showed real perseverance.”

Injury Incidents and Reports

Injured students will be taken to the office, if they can be safely moved. The administrative assistant or a volunteer will tend minor injuries, and the person who witnessed the incident will fill out an incident report. If the injured student needs more than minor treatment, the child’s parent will be called. A copy of the injury incident will be given to the child’s parents and the original filed in the child’s file.

Sick Student Policy

At Home

CMCS asks that parents do not send sick children to school. If your child has a contagious disease or infection, a fever, or is vomiting, please keep that child at home. Please call the school as soon as possible, to let us know your child will be absent.

If your child has a communicable disease please let us know, so that we can watch for signs in the other students. The student may not return without a note from a doctor stating that she/he is clear and able to return to school.

At School

If a student says he or she is not feeling well, the teacher will ask the nature of the problem. After listening to the child’s complaint, the teacher will offer an appropriate remedy such as a drink of water, the use of the bathroom, or a short break from his work.

If the child still says he feels sick, the teacher will send him to the administrative assistant. The assistant will allow the child to rest in the office for fifteen minutes. If, after fifteen minutes, the child is not running a fever or has not vomited, the administrative assistant may encourage the child to go back to class or contact a parent.

A child’s emergency contact will be called if the child is obviously in distress, vomits, or is running a temperature of 100°F or more.

Medications

All student medications should be labeled with the student's name, kept in the school office and administered by the administrative assistant or other designated personnel. Clear and concise instructions and labeling **must** accompany any medications, or school staff will not administer them. If your child must keep prescription medication at school or regularly needs non-prescription medication, such as Tylenol or Advil, please fill out a medication dispensing form and leave it and the medication with the school administrative assistant. Any unused medications will be returned to a child's parent at the end of the dispensing period or the school year. New medications and forms should be submitted at the beginning of each year.

Inhalers: All students who regularly use an inhaler must have a backup inhaler in addition to the current one they are using. Inhalers have a long shelf life, and keeping an extra one at school will prevent your child from needing to use one and finding it empty. When the one in use is empty we will send it home and ask for a replacement. **Any student who is permitted to carry and use their inhaler without adult supervision must have written permission from a doctor.**

Lice and Bed Bugs

If your child or anyone in your home contracts lice or if your home becomes infested with bed bugs please **notify the school at once**. We understand that people contract both lice and bedbugs through no fault of their own and that both of these can be very expensive and difficult to eradicate. The best way to assure that they do not spread is to inform those whom you have contact with and to take care in your interaction with others.

A child who has had lice may return to school with a note from a doctor or a company such as Rapunzel's Lice Boutique stating he is free of lice and nits. If your home becomes infested with bed bugs please make sure all clothing, shoes, coats, and backpacks are heat treated in a clothes dryer for 30 minutes and stored in an airtight container until they are used. **All parents are responsible to report BB home infestations and student lice infestations to the school and to follow the recommended protocol. (See links)**

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/bed_bug_complete_web2_304873_7.pdf
http://michigan.gov/documents/Final_Michigan_Head_Lice_Manual_103750_7.pdf

Dress code

The home and school need to cooperate in the matter of dress. School is the child's place of business, and children who are dressed in appropriate school clothing tend to do a better job. Students are required to dress modestly. Their attire should not be disruptive to the learning environment. Students are expected to look neat and clean. In addition, as students will be outside often, they need to have clothes appropriate for all weather.

Footwear: All students should wear low-heeled, sturdy and comfortable play shoes. They should have boots for muddy, rainy, or snowy days. **Flip-flops and slippers are not allowed**, as they both hold the potential for injury. Children must wear shoes during school. If they wear snow or rain boots, they should bring shoes for indoors. In

addition, please send a pair of rubber boots or an old pair of shoes that can be left at school for use on muddy days and during nature study.

Clothing: Shorts and skirts that come to the knees (or to the fingertips when arms are extended) are permitted. Pants must cover underwear and skin below shirt. Shirts must cover any cleavage and bra straps. **No spaghetti straps or strapless shirts are allowed.** If a child's shirt does not provide appropriate coverage, the office will loan one to the student. In addition, this code applies to parents and volunteers who work in the school.

Outerwear: Students at CMCS go outdoors during most types of weather and need to dress accordingly. Children who are not dressed for the weather will go outdoors and be cold.

Physical Education Class: Students should bring or wear gym shoes and sweatpants or gym shorts (not too short) on their P.E. day.

Cell Phones and Other Wireless Devices: Students must keep cell phones and all other electronic devices turned off and in their backpacks while on school property.

Tuition Payments

CMCS offers two payment plans. Tuition payments are due the first of the month, according to your payment plan, starting June 1st. Unless it presents a significant hardship, we request that each family sets up automatic tuition payments through the school.

Friday Update

In an effort to keep our families informed of the doings at CMCS, an update will be e-mailed to each family every Friday. These updates will have reminders, upcoming events and other information regarding the week at school. Please provide an e-mail address to the office and check your email each weekend. **If you do not have Internet access, please notify the office, and a hard copy will be given to your student on Friday at dismissal.**

Communication

The office regularly sends out information to our families via e-mail and text message. It is important that you provide an e-mail address and a working phone number that you check on a regular basis.

Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of CMCS's curriculum. The various grades average 2 field trips a month, including Nature Study trips. Field trip notifications will be sent via the weekly update. For students under 4'9" or 8 yrs old, a booster seat **MUST** be provided.

Teacher-Parent Concerns

If parents have concerns about a teacher's methods, the parents should:

1. Meet with the teacher to discuss concerns.
2. If more clarification is necessary or parents are dissatisfied, a meeting can be arranged with the administrator.
3. If the administrator thinks it is necessary, a meeting can be arranged with the Board.

Procedures of Student Evaluation

Charlotte Mason Community School does not give letter grades. Instead, students receive a brief written description of what the class did that term, a few words describing the student's strengths and weaknesses in subjects, and a few words describing the student's strengths and weaknesses in the habits.

Students of Charlotte Mason Community School are evaluated in the following ways throughout the school year:

1. Each student participates in an evaluation prior to enrollment.
2. Teachers hold conferences with parents twice during the school year.
3. Teachers write evaluations of progress three times a year.
4. Teachers write mid-term progress reports.

Parental Involvement

Parents are children's first teachers. Seeing their parents involved in the life of the school gives children a sense of ownership of the school. Parent participation in their children's education is a proven factor in school success.

Charlotte Mason Community School is the result of parents and educators working together to provide a quality education for our children. An ongoing working relationship between parents and educators at CMCS is essential to providing a rich educational environment for our children. For this reason, all Charlotte Mason parents are encouraged to participate in school activities **3-4 times per term**. This can be divided between parents/guardians and other family members, but a parent must contribute the majority of the time. In addition, parents must attend all orientations and parent/teacher conferences. (These count toward Parent Hours.)

Parental participation offers untold dividends to children and adults alike. Children enjoy having their parents in the classroom and internalize the importance of education when their parents are actively involved. Parents grow through interacting with other parents with whom they can share ideas, resources, and positive parenting skills. Parental involvement also helps to build a strong educational community and provides opportunities

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for positive lifelong relationships for parents and children. In addition to the suggested parent involvement activities, parents are welcome as volunteers both in the classroom and in the operation of the school.

The following is a list of possible ways for parents to be involved at school:

- Work as a regularly scheduled classroom parent
- Library maintenance
- Recycling
- Fundraising
- Assist with field trip preparations
- Chaperone field trips
- Use a special skill (building play equipment, landscaping, gardening, etc.)
- Assist in the office
- Supervise children at morning recess and/or lunchtime
- Run errands
- Greet students at the door in AM
- Coordinate parent participation
- Assist with Nature Study
- Assist with P.E.
- Assist with Handcrafts
- Serve on the Board of Directors and/or committees
- Attend CMCS Community Nights
- Attend Bring Someone Special to School Days

The following is a list of possible ways for parents to be involved at home:

- Read to or with your child
- Play a board game as a family
- Ask your child about their day at school and what they are studying
- Help your child memorize his or her recitation pieces
- Read the weekly e-mail update from the school
- Participate in the school fundraisers
- Read the weekly e-mail from your child's teacher
- Check the CMCS Facebook page

Fundraisers

The Charlotte Mason School board acknowledges that parents may want to operate fundraisers to raise money for tuition, trips, special school needs, etc. In that case, a board of interested parents may be formed, which needs to include one Charlotte Mason Board representative. Charlotte Mason Community School will lend its name to fundraisers that meet the following guidelines:

- The Board determines that people get good value for their money. Ideally, items sold should be things people need, e.g., food, as in pizza kits.
- All fundraising proceeds will go into a general scholarship fund to be distributed at the Board's discretion. (Because of state regulations of non-profits, we cannot raise funds for specific students.)
- All money from such fundraisers will be collected, counted, and recorded by two people.

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The CMCS staff is honored and pleased to serve your children and you. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please contact:

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