

# Owls

## Developmental Kindergarten



Family Handbook  
2024-2025

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*VCFC has designed this handbook to inform families of the Owls Developmental Kindergarten Program policies and procedures.*

## WELCOME

The VCFC Owls Developmental Kindergarten Program guides children through their kindergarten year of school. By employing a learning framework that prioritizes creativity and exploration, Owls integrates nature and art into a project-based Emergent Curriculum with a strong emphasis on inquiry-based learning championing play and hands-on discovery as efficacious learning processes. Owls educators will use their understanding of children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development to foster a safe, developmentally appropriate, rigorous, and stimulating learning environment where children are actively engaged and encouraged to succeed.

Administered by the Vanderbilt Child and Family Center and licensed by the State of Tennessee Department of Education, the Owls developmental kindergarten program offers an emergent curriculum informed by social constructivist thinking theories:

- ❖ Children learn best through play, constructing knowledge and making meaning by exploring their big ideas through hands-on and hands-in investigations.
- ❖ Peer engagement adds richness to the learning process.
- ❖ A learning framework that prioritizes Nature Education - children's knowledge creation will be informed by daily outdoor adventures and their exploration of the Vanderbilt University campus.
- ❖ A learning focus on 21st Century Skills: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

## ABOUT THE OWLS PROGRAM

- August 5, 2024 – May 30, 2025 (approximately 200 school days)
- Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM
- Before Care is available 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM and After Care is available 3:00 PM – 5:30 PM (for an additional fee)
- Inclement weather closure of Owls Program is determined by VCFC in accordance with university administration but may not precisely align with Vanderbilt student class closure.
- School Office: telephone 615-322-1083
- Questions? Contact: [cfcadmin@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:cfcadmin@vanderbilt.edu)

## POLICIES

### *Attendance*

Owls kindergarten hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM.

Children need to arrive promptly, well fueled from breakfast and 8 – 12 hours sleep at home and dressed for rigorous adventure with school backpack and a fully filled reusable water bottle.

The program is closed on all holidays observed by Vanderbilt University, unless otherwise communicated.

### *Respectful Use of Space and Facilities During Drop Off and Pick Up Times*

Your partnership to establish safe and respectful boundaries for your student is so appreciated. Please make sure your student is supervised by you at all times until signed into the program and placed with the staff in the classroom with visual and verbal confirmation. Please encourage walking feet. Please do not allow your student or their siblings to open doors, climb on furniture, or touch materials, supplies, and tools.

### *Location*

The program operates out of The Owls Nest at 1810 Edgehill and the playground at the 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue Acorn childcare center, with regular walks within the surrounding six blocks. Bigger excursions will be communicated to families in advance via the weekly newsletter.

### *Parking*

There is designated family parking for drop off and pick up at the 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue Acorn childcare center and behind The Owls Nest at 1810 Edgehill Avenue.

### *Sign In and Sign Out*

All children must be signed in and out daily by an adult parent or guardian with the correct day, date, and time and their full legal signature. Children will not be admitted and should not be signed in if they are exhibiting any symptoms of illness per the Well Child Policy (Appendix A).

The adult responsible for taking the student from the program must be on the student's Emergency Information form authorization list. A government issued photo ID is required of anyone picking up the child – please have it ready to show to the staff member on duty as requested. The authorized person must visually and verbally connect with the staff member on duty and sign the student out, with the accurate time and date of the pick up.

VCFC staff have the responsibility to and will refuse to release a child to any person

- (a) who appears to be incapacitated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance that may impair their judgement to safely care for a child, or
- (b) whose behavior may, as deemed by a reasonable person, place the child in imminent risk.

In the event of such an occurrence, staff members will suggest that another authorized individual (listed on the child's Emergency Information form) be contacted to come and pick the child up.

If the authorized adult picking up does not cooperate and insists on removing their child from care, and/or if the staff member reasonably believes that refusal to release the child could place staff or other children at imminent risk, staff are directed to release the child to the adult, but immediately call VUPD 911 (or non-emergency 322-2745) to report the potential risk and/or a possibly impaired driver.

## **FEES**

The following financial policies and procedures are in place:

- A non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required to reserve the child's spot (these will be accepted on a rolling basis until classroom capacity is met)
- A non-refundable instructional supplies fee of \$1200 is required by April 1, 2024 (or upon enrollment if after.)
- The non-refundable program tuition of \$1,200 (ten payments) is payable in advance by the first of the month August 2024 through May 2025
- There is a \$25.00 returned check fee.
- Lunch, a child's Owls t-shirt, and field trips will be included in the tuition.
- There is no pro-ration of tuition for child absences.
- Families will provide one month's (thirty days) written notice of intention to disenroll or the financial equivalency of one month's tuition fee.
- In the event parents are unable to pick up their child and depart on time, the child's account will be charged a late fee of \$10 for every five minutes which is due and payable within 24 hours of billing.

## **INCLUSION**

In compliance with federal law, Vanderbilt University does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, military service, covered veterans' status, or genetic information in its administration of educational policies, programs, activities; or other University-administered programs. In addition, the University does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their gender expression.

VCFC has the express policy that differences are to be celebrated; it is our diversity which gives our programs strength. To foster students' positive self-image and self-esteem there will be intentionally planned curricula to affirm the family, including cultural, ethnic and racial identities. (Ladson-Billings 2009; Wright, Counsell, & Tate 2015). All staff members will strive to assume best intention and to be kind in communication with others by being a good listener and support for students. The program seeks at all times to operate from a unified anti-racism and pro-LGBTQI stance and to reflect the University's goals for equity and social justice. VCFC recognizes that all - children, families, and colleagues are - on a journey of growth with these issues.

## **HYDRATION AND NUTRITION**

Students are required every day to bring a reusable water bottle labeled in permanent ink with the child's first and last name, and photo (please apply clear packing tape over the photo to make it waterproof.)

VCFC provides students a nutritious lunch catered by VU Campus Dining and the menu is communicated to families in advance (Appendix C). The student may choose to bring a nut-free, no chocolate, low sugar lunch from home in a reusable lunchbox. Sharing food will not be permitted. Refrigeration and microwaving is not available.

Students enrolled in the Before and After Care program are provided with nutritious snacks in the morning (approximately 8:00 AM) and afternoon (approximately 3:30 PM).

### *Food Allergies*

If your child is allergic to any food include all known food and other allergies on the registration form – please be specific. If your child develops an allergy after enrollment update the form and notify your child’s teacher. (Appendix C)

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Outdoor play and explorations are an important foundational learning experience for students. VCFC appreciates that our kindergarten is located on Vanderbilt’s walkable campus with its unique and distinctive park setting and will take full advantage to engage the students with the outside public art, arboretum, and green open spaces. Outdoor play will take place every day that the temperature registers between 32 and 95 degrees. Please send children in clothing appropriate for the weather, labeled with the child’s first and last name. Children are required to wear rubber-soled shoes with closed toes and heels, with socks. Parents will apply a thick coat of sunscreen to their child every morning before bringing them to school. Parents may choose to use insect repellent on the child by applying it at home. Teachers will encourage the child to reapply their sunscreen and, if desired, insect repellent after lunch.

## **NATURE EDUCATION**

The Owls Kindergarten program offers a strong focus on Nature Education. Nature-based education is a learning process that takes nature as both the object of study and is the learning environment. Materials and approaches are all focused on nurturing deeper connections with nature. Nature-based learning gives children an opportunity to experience nature as a doorway that facilitates learning while promoting a sense of responsibility for the environment and a sense of place in the natural world. Rich and abundant opportunities for learning can be found by walking through the Vanderbilt Arboretum. It facilitates science learning and supports emotional well-being through predictions of light, shadow, wind and weather, and observing how seasons change the world of birds, insects, animals, and plants in our neighborhood. VCFC’s respect for children’s biophilia is expressed through the Owls nature-based program design that empowers children through risk and rigor to reinforce the 21st century skills (core competencies) of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

*“In a multidisciplinary synthesis of empirical literature, Tremblay and colleagues (2015) conclude a consistent relationship exists between engaging in nature outside and healthy child development and suggest play in natural environments is more complex and diverse, gender neutral, and promotes more occurrences of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Spending time outside has positive effects on children’s cognitive, physical, emotional well-being, mental health, creativity, problem solving, self-regulation, resilience, and language (Evans, 2006; Louv, 2005; O’Brien & Murray, 2007; Tremblay et al, 2015; Wells, 2000). Nature can be a form of therapy for physical as well as psychological conditions (Louv, 2005). Studies involving childhood issues such as physical fitness and depression suggest a relationship between time outside and a decrease in these childhood concerns (Frost, 2006; Sallis & Glanz, 2006).”*

## **MEDICATION AND ALLERGIES**

VCFC will administer only rescue medication for a medically-documented life-threatening condition. (see Appendix A) This program will not utilize a medical professional for administration of medicine.

Only emergency medication will be kept on site. All such medication must be provided to staff in original packaging, must not have expired, and will require a label and dosing information. On the registration form, list all the medications your child is currently taking and any that might be required while in the program.

Medication will be stored out of reach of children and may only be accessed by parents/guardians and VCFC staff. Children may not carry medication on their person or in their backpack or cubby.

Please note all food and other allergies on the registration form.

## **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

The kindergarten program supports children to have a positive self-image, ask for help when needed, express feelings with words, display self-control, take pride in accomplishment, and demonstrate awareness of other people's feelings. VCFC uses the research-based [Pyramid Tools](#) for Social Emotional Development to assess practice and support learners.

Parents are partners with educators and administration in efforts to best support the learning and enrichment experience. Parents are expected to communicate any well-being concerns related to their child prior to admission in the kindergarten program and if there is a change. If there is an elevated concern for the well-being of your child or other children in the program, staff will communicate with the parents for the best resolution. (Appendix D)

## **DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

Make sure your student wears comfortable, washable clothes and socks and closed toe and heel shoes to enable miles of walking. No jewelry or makeup, please. Dressing appropriately for rigorous learning is a safety necessity. Send layers for changeable weather.

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

VCFC asks parents/guardians to exercise caution when allowing students to bring personal items to the program. It is recommended that all personal belonging not necessary to the program be left at home. **VCFC does not assume responsibility or liability for any items brought from home that become lost or broken.**

VCFC does not allow candy, cosmetics, gum, money, cell phones, illegal substances or weapons of any kind. **If these items are observed, staff will confiscate and may ask the parent to come and immediately pick up their child and the item.**

## **BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

Be Kind.

Be Safe.

Be Respectful.

Have Fun.

Speak and act in the way you hope to be treated by others.

Find solutions and solve problems by working with others. Ask for help when needed.

We all get frustrated, talk to a teacher about what you're frustrated about.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

VCFC understands that an undesirable behavior provides an opportunity for the child to develop an important skill; it is not a "morals" issue. The Owls classroom is designed to be pro-social to help children develop engagement skills and to manage their emotions.

It is possible that some children may exhibit consistent behaviors that are detrimental to the ongoing safety and security of the other students in the program. This may include aggression toward peers. VCFC will handle these situations discreetly, compassionately, and in partnership with the family.

In the unlikely event that student behaviors do not respond to the efforts of staff and parents to correct the behavior, VCFC will be unable to continue to accept the student in the kindergarten program. (Appendix C)

## **MANDATED REPORTER AND CHILD MALTREATMENT**

Maltreatment and abuse of a child is prohibited by Vanderbilt policy and the law. Staff are held to a high standard to assure children under their care are safe and supervised. All staff are required to report concerns of maltreatment by others. This includes internal reporting and possible reporting to the State of Tennessee (in compliance with the law) if child abuse is suspected. Training is provided to all VCFC staff about identifying and reporting child abuse. Vanderbilt University personnel (including VCFC staff) adhere to Tennessee state law on mandatory child abuse reporting. If you have any concerns about maltreatment, please report those immediately to VCFC or the Vanderbilt Protection of Minors Director ([protectionofminors@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:protectionofminors@vanderbilt.edu)).

## **HOMEWORK**

In alignment with credible research that finds no benefit to young children or their families from homework, the Owls Program does not assign it. Your family's nurturing routine (e.g., making dinner together, completing chores, taking a walk, playing board games, reading, singing, playing a musical instrument, counting the stars, snuggling a pet) is more important. Your nightly parent responsibilities will not include helping your child complete worksheets.

Parents will help their child to get a public library card before their first day of Owls. Families are required to read together at home, in any written language, at least two hours weekly - this may look like 30 minutes most nights or hourly twice a week.



## **CELEBRATIONS, HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS**

Culture is often affirmed through holiday. Owls wants to ensure that children and their parents see themselves reflected in our language, and in the broad array of literature that we display, read, and discuss. Teachers facilitate classroom discussions to support children's positive self-identity. Owls seeks to honor each unique child by endeavoring to understand their beliefs, and to create dynamic spaces for sharing and learning culture balancing this with the understanding that a positive school culture should offer respite to children and their families from the secular marketing frenzy that assaults all our senses during holiday times.

Children's birthdays are a special time and Owls students will be recognized with a song and a cheer. Please do not bring food or gift bags to school.

## **DOCUMENTING THE WHOLE CHILD**

### *Conferences*

Parent-Teacher conferences are an important opportunity for adults to recognize the student's strengths and where they may be struggling, to understand the Whole Child, and to forge a partnership to support student success. Parents will meet with teachers for 30 minutes each trimester (September, January, May).

### *Portfolio*

Each student has a portfolio comprised of teachers' anecdotal notes and the child's work samples. Children will review their portfolio monthly with their teacher, contribute their monthly Home Reading Log, and suggest any work sample additions. Portfolio contents inform Parent Teacher conferences.

### *Assessment*

Assessment is simply one point of data. Owls will not "test" kindergarteners. It is not the child's job to prove to adults that they are learning, it is the responsibility of adults to observe and document children's growth and development using research-based tools.

The Owls program will utilize the ASQ/ASQ-SE developmental tool in August and April. This process asks the parents to reflect on their child and complete a checklist based on their observation of their child in the home. The teacher will complete the checklist based on their observation of the child at school, and score both checklists to inform the Parent-Teacher conference.

Peabody researchers support assessment of Owls students in November and April using the Woodcock-Johnson IV, one of the most widely used batteries of individually administered psycho-educational tests. The WJ IV's focus on evaluation of relative strengths and weaknesses helps identify and describe patterns of performance across achievement, language, and cognitive domains that are key to diagnosing learning problems and developing targeted interventions for individual needs.



### ***Literacy Measures***

Woodcock-Johnson Spelling. Assesses children's writing and spelling skills (drawing lines and tracing, writing letters, and spelling orally presented words). This subtest measures both children's fine motor skills (using a pencil to draw lines/trace images on paper) and letter and print knowledge (using a pencil to write orally presented letters/words).

Woodcock-Johnson Letter-Word Identification. Assesses children's ability to recognize letters and sight words. Items require children to identify and pronounce presented letters and pronounce presented sight words.

### ***Mathematics Measures***

Woodcock-Johnson Applied Problems. Assesses children's ability to solve mathematics problems. The early part of this subtest focuses primarily on number sense and counting.

Woodcock-Johnson Quantitative Concepts. Assesses children's knowledge of mathematical concepts (including vocabulary, numbers, shapes, symbols), and number line knowledge.

***VCFC reserves the right to identify and implement additional developmental assessment tools as appropriate.***

### ***Transcript***

The Owls Kindergarten program maintains a transcript for each child aligned to the State of Tennessee Department of Education Early Learning standards (TNELDs) and Kindergarten Academic standards. This can be a helpful document for parents as the student matriculates to first grade (or another kindergarten.)

VCFC will release the child's Owls transcript to the independent and public schools of the family's choosing by June 2025 once parents complete the Transcript Transfer request form at their new school of choice in May 2025.

### *Presentation of Learning*

Each Owls student will make a Presentation of Learning to their parent in May. This is a public speaking opportunity for the child, empowering them to address their family and their teachers directly to share their strength and achievements. This will be scheduled for the last trimester Parent Teacher conference.

### **ATELIER**

The Owls Atelier is an important learning space, foundational to the child's developmental expression of literacy (speaking, reading, and writing skills) and geometric, numeric and pre-algebraic conceptual knowledge. It is designed to support children's individual exploration of their big ideas and aid them in the documentation of their research, reinforce small motor development through both innovation with and proper use of tools, and encourage dyad, small group, and whole group engagement through child-led play and adult-framed games and projects.

The Owls program's goals for the Atelier draws from many resources, including the social constructivist work of Reggio Emilia that conceptualizes an atelier as an environment that promotes knowledge and creativity and, through design, suggests questions and generates evocations; and the four foundational disciplines of art aligned with the National Standards for Visual Arts Education:

1. **ART PRODUCTION** (the making of art) Making art is a major part of curriculum and instruction for art education; however, hands-on activities are placed into a broad context by an approach that integrates all four disciplines, as well as interdisciplinary connections. Artwork produced in this kind of "environment" tends to be informed, content grounded, and purposeful.
2. **ART HISTORY** (exploration of the artistic heritage of many cultures) Study of art works, styles, and movements provide historical and cultural contexts for understanding art as a vital and significant aspect of the achievements of humankind. Students learn to see and value connections among art and events across space, time, and cultures.
3. **ART CRITICISM** (analysis of qualities and features of art) Students learn the language of art, how to critique art, and how to support and defend preferences as informed reasons, rather than opinions. Expressing ideas, reasoning articulately – both verbally and in writing – is essential to processes of art criticism.
4. **AESTHETICS** (thinking about art and making informed judgments about art) Objectives and strategies tailored to appropriate developmental levels help students think about and respond to aesthetics questions (for which there are rarely "right" answers). Students learn to understand, appreciate, and generate their own ideas about art, culture, and the human condition. They

learn to select and use evidence, justify, defend, and present a persuasive case for their views. Students also learn how people justify judgments about art by applying appropriate criteria to determine the intent of an artwork as representational (realistic), structural (formal) or expressive (emotional).

### **FIELD TRIPS**

The Owls class engages in field trips to chase curiosity, support research through fieldwork, and feel confident as citizens of the world in their navigation of the Nashville community.

In addition to the abundance of inspiring spaces on the Vanderbilt campus, Owls students may take Metro bus excursions to places of interest in the neighborhood including to the Frist Museum and Nashville Public Library Main Branch. (See Appendix D.)



## AGREEMENTS

I have read The Owls Kindergarten Handbook and agree to comply with the policies and procedures contained therein.

(Please initial)

\_\_\_ I have been provided a copy of and thoroughly read the Handbook. I understand that a copy is also available on the VCFC website.

\_\_\_ I have read and understand and agree to comply with the policies and procedures set forth in the Handbook.

\_\_\_ I understand and agree that neither Vanderbilt Child and Family Center, Vanderbilt University, nor any of their officers, agents, or employees are liable for bodily injuries or illnesses suffered by my child(ren) or for damages to personal belongings.

\_\_\_ I understand that Vanderbilt cannot promise or guarantee that my child will not be exposed to an infectious disease. I understand that if my child is immunocompromised my child could be at greater risk of infection and complications. I knowingly accept these risks. I understand that the illness and exposure procedures contained in the FAQ section of the program application are fluid and that procedures may change depending on Vanderbilt policies as well as DOE, Metro Nashville, and the CDC guidelines and recommendations. I understand that failure to comply with procedures may result in disenrollment of my child.

\_\_\_ Weapons Prohibition: Vanderbilt University is a private institution. All childcare sites (VCFC/Acorn Schools and Susan Gray School) are a part of the university campus. Consistent with university policy and childcare licensing regulations, Vanderbilt University strictly prohibit weapons, including firearms, concealed or otherwise, on the premises of the childcare centers excepting only on-duty law enforcement officers. **Persons with handgun carry permits are not exempt from this prohibition.** The weapons prohibition includes knives and explosives. I understand that persons in violation of this policy will not be admitted to the facility/will be removed from the facility, and may be subject to disenrollment from childcare programs for violating this policy.

\_\_\_ I understand that VCFC reserves the right to update this Handbook at any time, to ensure compliance with Vanderbilt University and State of Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) policies and practices and for the continued safety of children and staff.

\_\_\_ I understand my student's image will be used in photographs and or any media within the The Acorn School program's creative space (e.g., bulletin boards, crafts, newsletters.)

\_\_\_ (optional) I give permission for my student's image to be used on the VCFC website and social media, and VU website and publications.

\_\_\_ (optional) I give permission for staff to apply sunscreen to my child as needed. I understand that I am responsible for supplying the sunscreen and that the sunscreen I supply must be in the original container, labeled with my child's first and last name.

\_\_\_ (optional) I give permission for staff to apply insect repellent to my child as needed. I understand that I am responsible for supplying insect repellent and that the insect repellent I supply must be in the original container, labeled with my child's first and last name.

Name of Child to be Enrolled \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*A copy of this form will be maintained in your child's file*

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Well Child**

Owls students must be able to engage in the rigorous daily rhythm of the Owls kindergarten program to attend. Parent partnership is necessary to comply with the Well Child Policies. The goal is to keep children in school. The health of all children is the priority over the inconvenience to one family asked to keep their unwell child at home.

### **Report Contagious Illness**

To report contagious illness, parents will send a message through Brightwheel or call the program as soon as possible and within the day of diagnosis so that the classroom can be informed and the illness posted in accordance with licensing policy (the child's identity will be kept confidential.)

### **Hand Washing**

Hand washing is the #1 prevention practice in place at VCFC to prevent illness. By teaching children healthy hygiene practices, adults minimize the spread of illness.

- Parents will facilitate children's handwashing upon entering the classroom.
- Teachers will ensure every child washes their hands before and after eating and after toileting.

### **Daily Health Assessment**

Parents will assess their child's health and wellness based on the child's behavior at home (e.g., lethargy, poor appetite, fever, unexplained rash, diarrhea) before leaving for school as a first indicator of ill health. If upon arrival the teacher perceives that the child is not well enough to attend the Owls Kindergarten program, the child will be sent home with the parent.

If the child becomes ill while at school, they will be isolated from the rest of the children. Parents will be notified and asked to come and pick up the child from the Owls classroom as soon as possible and within one hour.

### **Returning to School After Illness**

Children will not be burdened by schoolwork while they are home recuperating from illness. They are encouraged to read and draw.

Children may return to school after they have been symptom free 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication. VCFC defines these policies in an effort to protect the health and safety of all children enrolled in the program. These policies align with the Metro Nashville

Public Schools' policies. Parents may not bring a child to Owls if they exhibit any of the following symptoms and until the student is symptom free for 24 hours:

- Fever: A fever of 100 degrees or higher. Fevers are generally an indication that the body is attempting to fight off infection.
- Nasal Discharge: A clogged or runny nose with green or yellow mucus. The only exception is if the child was seen by a pediatrician and has a pediatric release note.\*
- Conjunctivitis: Commonly termed Pink Eye, this condition is highly contagious. Symptoms include itchy, watery eyes or discharge. The child may not be at VCFC until symptom free or if the parent provides a pediatric release note.\*
- Lice: The child must be louse and nit free to be readmitted to school. A child diagnosed with scabies or lice shall have written documentation proof of treatment signed and dated prior to readmission, per licensing regulation.
- Diarrhea: This is especially of concern because of the risk of dehydration. The child may not be at VCFC until symptom free. Teachers recognize the difference between loose stool and diarrhea; a parent's assessment of loose stool cannot be substituted for the teacher's assessment.
- Vomiting: This is especially of concern because of the risk of dehydration. The child may not be at VCFC until symptom free. Teachers recognize the difference between spit-up and vomiting; a parent's assessment of spit up cannot be substituted for the teacher's assessment.
- Unexplained Skin Conditions/Rash: Children will be excluded from Owls for any patterns of small bumps, blisters, and blotches (including: Chicken Pox, Fifth's Disease, Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease, Impetigo, Measles, Rubella, Scarlet Fever.)

The child may not return to school until well enough to meet the demands of a rigorous Nature Education program, and until symptom free or if the parent provides a pediatric release note\* meeting all the following components:

- ✓ The note must be dated within 48 hours of the day provided to VCFC (presented on the day the parent seeks to readmit the student to the Owls classroom)
- ✓ The note must be stamped by the medical office that issued it
- ✓ The note must expressly state that the child was examined by a physician or physician's assistant
- ✓ The note must expressly state that the child is well enough to attend a group program with other students
- ✓ The note must expressly state that the child poses no risk of contagion to the other children and adults in the school



## **Administration of Medication**

VCFC will not administer medication to children. This includes pain relievers for gum or muscle soreness. Parents may choose to provide their child with pain relievers by administering these at home as long as the medication does not mask symptoms of contagious illness.

### *Antibiotics*

Children are often no longer contagious and are well enough to return to school before they complete a course of antibiotics. Parents should ask their pediatrician for twice a day antibiotics so that the family can store and administer the medication at home. In the event this is not possible, parents may come to the class to administer the antibiotic to their child.

### *Chronic Conditions*

VCFC recognizes that some children live with certain chronic conditions under consistent pediatric management (e.g., asthma, diabetes, EpiPen for severe allergy.) In these rare instances, VCFC will compassionately partner with parents to ensure needed emergency medication is on site to be administered in a true emergency. However, parents are expected to manage routine medication administration in non-emergencies.

Emergency medications will be managed as follows:

- Parents must first communicate directly with Michelle Wyatt, Site Director, to request an exemption, providing supporting medical documentation as required.
- Parents will provide the medication in its original container with written directions on the dosage and frequency, with a signed and dated pediatric note listing the diagnosis and these precise instructions.
- Medication will not be administered to the child in any manner or for any reason except as stated on the pediatric note on file.
- Parents must update this note quarterly (or more frequently if asked).
- Parents have the sole responsibility to maintain medication and inventory it regularly to ensure it is replaced ahead of expiration. Teachers are required to discard expired medication on the date of expiration and are not responsible to notify parents.
- Teacher will document every medication administration, per licensing regulation.

***VCFC reserves the right to review and update these policies and procedures at any time.***

## APPENDIX B

### Catered Lunch

The Owls program provides students with lunch. Sometimes this will be a hot lunch in the classroom and sometimes this will be a picnic box for field trips. Nutrition practices:

- ❖ Students are responsible for washing hands, sitting in a chair with feet on the floor or seated for picnic, and trying new foods.
- ❖ Teachers sit with children to model courtesy and proper use of tools.
- ❖ Students are required to wash their hands and join the lunch table.
- ❖ Students are encouraged to try each food. No child will be forced to eat.
- ❖ Teachers recognize that meal-time is an optimal curricular activity to reinforce children's small motor skills, language development, and prosocial engagement as they identify as part of a community.
- ❖ The Owls School menu is published for the month on the VCFC website: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/child-family-center/child-care-center/menus.php>
- ❖ The weekly menu is posted in the classroom.
- ❖ VCFC is thrilled to partner with Vanderbilt Campus Dining on behalf of The Owl's nutrition program. <https://campusdining.vanderbilt.edu/ourmission-2/sustainability/>

### Food Allergies

If a student is allergic to any food (or develops an allergy after enrollment) parents are required to take the following steps:

- ❖ Inform the Site Director by email (you will be provided with any necessary forms required by licensing.)
- ❖ Notify classroom teachers immediately, verbally and in writing.

### Food-Related Conditions

Parents must meet with their Site Director and provide supporting medical verification (a signed and dated note from your child's pediatrician) identifying the condition (e.g., food allergy, Celiac Disease, Diabetes) and listing specific foods your child is not allowed to eat. Without documentation, teachers will not withhold any item from the lunch service.

Families may provide an alternative lunch for their child (e.g., if their dietary restrictions vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free, halal, kosher are not accommodated by the published menu.) The lunch from home is packed in a reusable lunch box and all items must be nut-free, low-sugar, and no chocolate or it will not be served. Foods will not be heated or refrigerated and must be packed appropriately, for example cold foods with an ice pack

and hot foods in a thermos – children will be helped with opening lids until they learn to do this skill independently. Food must be packed in appropriate portions in ready to eat containers and will not be diced, sliced, spooned-up or decanted by teachers.

There is no tuition adjustment for families that provide their own meals and snacks.

### **Sharing Food from Home**

Due to complex food allergy management, parents may not bring in or order food for their child's classroom to be shared with peers. Owls will not distribute food in classrooms brought in by parents, including to celebrate children's birthdays.

It is possible that a classroom may engage in a cooking project. Teachers will design these learning activities to ensure that every child in the classroom can be included and will notify parents in advance by posting a lesson plan. Parents may be invited to supply an ingredient.

VCFC assumes no responsibility or liability for foods provided by families.

***VCFC reserves the right to review and update these policies and procedures at any time.***

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SUPPORTING FAMILIES**

The Owls Kindergarten Program makes a strong effort to work with families in crisis, to find real and reasonable solutions that will support children and parents. It is a DOE licensing requirement to state that VCFC reserves the right to terminate enrollment without notice for the following reasons:

- Non-compliance with policies and procedures, including late pick-up.
- Failure to submit required documentation, including updated immunizations (the child will be suspended from care until documents are received.)
- Failure to cooperate with the Well Child policy.
- Adults behaving in a manner that threatens the physical or emotional safety of the children and teachers on site.

### **RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES**

Behavioral Health Services (615) 340-2172

Department of Human Services (615) 313-4700

Department of Children's Services (615) 741-9701

Metro Public Health Department (615) 340-5616

### **CHILD ABUSE**

Maltreatment of a child is prohibited by Vanderbilt policy and the law. Staff are held to a high standard to assure children under their care are safe, and are required to report concerns of maltreatment by others. Training is provided to all VCFC staff on identifying and reporting child abuse. Vanderbilt University personnel (including VCFC staff) adhere to Tennessee state law on mandatory child abuse reporting.

### **TRANSITION**

VCFC has the expressed objective to support children's healthy growth and development. We recognize that many families are in transition and may experience issues that impact temporary or permanent child guardianship.

Parents experiencing family transitions (e.g., adult illness including drug rehabilitation, child custody, marital separation or divorce) may make an appointment to meet privately with their Site Director and/or the VCFC Executive Director to discuss any matters of importance in relation to issues affecting the well-being of the child as it

pertains to their enrollment in school. Administration will confidentially manage this information, sharing with teachers only necessary information regarding these changes in the home to support teachers to understand how to best support the student, especially as these may result in children's behavior changes in the classroom.

### **Parent/Guardian Custody Management**

It is imperative that the Owls teachers and all VCFC staff maintain good relationships with all the significant adults in each student's life. In order to provide the best possible care for your child, VCFC asks that parent/guardians strive to implement civil and respectful communication in their partnership with one another. Parents/Guardians will initiate communication with one another to ensure compliance with and understanding of the VCFC policies and procedures, and including by sharing calendar, conference dates, forms, and paperwork. This includes strategies for sharing conferences, newsletters, surveys, and other information.

Site Directors and teachers will not be utilized as go-betweens. To minimize uncomfortable situations, disputes, and problems, VCFC will not tolerate a parent/guardian speaking negatively about the other parent/guardian in front of any child or teachers. Adult confrontation with another on site is unacceptable, will not be tolerated, and will subject the family to immediate disenrollment.

### *Legal Documentation*

VCFC complies with the documentation requirements of the TN Department of Human Services regulations. Parents/Guardians must provide written clarity regarding any change in custody arrangements, and specifically list on the enrollment form which adult to contact first and will list only persons authorized to pick up the child. VCFC will share this data with VUPD as appropriate and necessary to support program compliance and to ensure the safety and well-being of all the children, parents, and staff on site.

VCFC will comply with any precise and specific directives of a court order to deny an identified parent/guardian access to the child during program hours or when releasing the child at pick-up time, but this paperwork must be provided in advance of the date of implementation for VCFC to honor and implement it.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

Discipline is an ongoing process embedded in the child’s experience and relationships. Discipline means “to teach.”

Children use physical expression to share their feelings and needs. An undesirable behavior presents an opportunity for the child to develop an important skill; it is not a “morals” issue. Teachers design the learning environment to support children with opportunities to grow their skills, including “soft skills” like naming big feelings and asking for help. Teachers intentionally address predictable early childhood “undesirable behaviors” through developmentally appropriate activities, class discussion, and individual coaching.

It is possible that some children may exhibit consistent behaviors that are detrimental to the ongoing safety and security of the other children in the classroom. This may include aggression toward peers, such as hitting, and kicking. VCFC will handle these situations discreetly, with compassion, and in partnership with the family.

VCFC will meet in person with the parents within 24 hours of the concerns being communicated to the family and before the student next attends. A written behavior plan signed by the parents and the Site Director will be put into place the day of the meeting. This must include:

- Identify the specific behavior being addressed (e.g., hitting peers)
- Identify supports in place (e.g., pairing the child with a specific buddy teacher)
- Identify needed supports (e.g., a pediatric developmental evaluation)
- Identify a precise timeline for the behavior plan (e.g., two weeks)
- Identify precise metrics of behavior improvement (e.g., “The child has used words, not hitting to express frustration; hitting is less than once per week.”)
- Identify peer respite strategy (e.g., “If the child hits, the parent will remove the child from the class for the rest of the day.”)

The parents will meet with the Owls teachers and Site Director to assess the efficacy of the written behavior plan, validate progress, and modify strategies. In the unlikely event that the child does not respond to the efforts of teachers and parents to correct the undesirable behavior, VCFC will provide the family with 30 days’ notice to determine a more appropriate school placement.

***VCFC reserves the right to review and update these policies and procedures at any time.***

## APPENDIX D

**Field Trips are an essential component of the Owls Kindergarten experience.**

### VCFC Kindergarten Field Trip Release of Liability

**SAMPLE: IMPORTANT! THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED FOR PARTICIPATION**

I, the parent or legal guardian of the undersigned, give permission for my child to participate in the Vanderbilt University (hereinafter "Vanderbilt") Child and Family Center Owls Kindergarten Field Trip to the \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter "activity") on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that transportation to and from the activity will be provided by a Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) bus at no cost to my child.

I understand that this activity will involve walking, step climbing, or other physical exertion. I acknowledge that my child is in good health and in proper physical condition to participate in the activity. I understand that Vanderbilt does not guarantee my child's safety during participation in the activity and that there are inherent risks of property damage and personal injury to my child and to others which are associated with the activity. Notwithstanding the inherent risks, I wish to assume them by allowing my child to voluntarily participate in this activity. I understand and agree that Vanderbilt, its students, volunteers, and staff (collectively referred to as "Parties") accept no responsibility for my child's acts or the acts of others while my child is participating in the activity.

I further understand that Vanderbilt does not guarantee my child's safety during participation in the activity and that there are inherent risks of property damage, personal injury, and exposure to COVID-19 or other infectious disease that may exist in any public place where people are present. COVID-19 is highly contagious and can lead to severe illness and death. Vanderbilt is following public health guidelines to reduce the spread of infection; however, Vanderbilt cannot guarantee that participants will not become infected with COVID-19. I acknowledge that my child cannot be protected from all risks of illness caused by COVID-19.

As a participant in the activity, my child assumes all risks to her/himself related to any exposure to COVID-19 (or any infectious disease) by voluntarily participating in this activity. I understand that the rules and regulations of the activity and Vanderbilt are designed for the safety and protection of all participants, and my child hereby agrees to abide by these rules and regulations.

I release Vanderbilt, its students, volunteers, and staff (collectively referred to as "Parties") from any responsibility for my child's acts or the acts of others while participating in this activity, and for any claim based on the spread or contraction of COVID-19 in connection with my child's participation in the Program, and I agree to hold Vanderbilt harmless from any third-party claim based on that participation.

Furthermore, in consideration of Vanderbilt offering this opportunity for my child to participate in this activity, I do agree to and hereby do release from fault, discharge, hold forever harmless and indemnify the Parties and its trustees, agents, officers, employees, representatives, and servants against loss (including reasonable attorneys' fees), from any and all claims, demands, rights, or causes of action of any kind or nature that may hereafter at any time be made or brought by me, or by any other person having a legal interest therein, arising from or by reason of any and all known or unknown, foreseen and unforeseen bodily or personal injuries, damages to property and consequences thereof which may be sustained by my child as a consequence of any accident or injuries in connection with the activity. Furthermore, I agree to indemnify Vanderbilt for any loss or damage to the premises, facilities, or equipment of Vanderbilt that my child may cause.

If my child should suffer an injury or illness while participating in this activity, or any other activity associated with the program, I authorize the Parties of Vanderbilt to use their discretion for transport of my child to a health care facility and I hereby take full legal and financial responsibility for that action.

I further grant and convey unto Vanderbilt all right, title and interest in any and to all photographic images and video or audio recordings and all copies thereto made by Vanderbilt during my child's participation in the activity, including but not limited to, any royalties, proceeds or other benefits derived from such photographs or records.

**Vanderbilt Protection of Minors Provision:** Vanderbilt University personnel adhere to Tennessee state law on mandatory reporting of actual or suspected child abuse. In addition, to external reporting, Vanderbilt has a mandatory internal child abuse reporting procedure. If you have reason to believe abuse or inappropriate behavior has occurred concerning a minor participating in a Vanderbilt University program, please consult the program director, or Risk Management (615-936-5935), or report via the Vanderbilt hotline at 844-814-5935. The Tennessee Child Abuse reporting hotline number is 877-237-0004.

CAUTION: READ BEFORE SIGNING

**By signing below, I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older and understand that I am entitled to have an attorney of my own choosing review this release prior to signing. I have read the foregoing Release in its entirety and understand that I am signing a complete and perpetual release and bar to any and all claims of ordinary negligence as defined above resulting from my child's participation in this activity. IF THE PARTICIPANT IS NOT 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, THIS RELEASE MUST BE SIGNED BY A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN. AS PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN, I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT THE ABOVE TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY EQUALLY TO MY MINOR CHILD AND TO MYSELF.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E

# Owls Program Hours

August 5, 2024 - May 30, 2025

Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

### CALENDAR

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
Monday, August 5, 2024	First Day of Owls New School Year
Monday, September 2, 2024	Labor Day <i>Students and teachers do not attend school</i>
Monday, September 23 -Friday, September 27, 2024	Owls Parent Teacher Conferences <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Friday, October 11, 2024	Owls Teacher Prep Day <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Thursday, November 28 – Friday, November 29, 2024	Thanksgiving <i>Students and teachers do not attend school</i>
Friday, December 20 and Monday, December 23, 2024	Owls Teacher Prep Days <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Tuesday, December 24, 2024 – Wednesday, January 1, 2025	Winter Break <i>Students and teachers do not attend school</i>
Thursday, January 2 – Friday, January 3, 2025	Owls Parent Teacher Conferences <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Monday, January 20, 2025	Martin Luther King Jr. <i>Students and teachers do not attend school</i>
Friday, March 7, 2025	Acorn Professional Development Day <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Monday, March 10, 2025 – Friday, March 14, 2025	Owls Spring Break <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Thursday, May 1 – Friday, May 2, 2025	Owls Parent Teacher Conferences <i>Students do not attend school</i>
Monday, May 26, 2025	Memorial Day <i>Students and teachers do not attend school</i>
Friday, May 30, 2025	Last Day of Owls New School Year

*The Owls Program at Vanderbilt University may be closed on designated chancellor days including due to inclement weather and on days as identified by public health agencies as necessary to manage the spread of infectious disease. There is no tuition proration including for dates of facility closure or child absences.*

## **APPENDIX E**

The Acorn School expectation is for the Owl student to attend class from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm for 180 days of the kindergarten academic calendar to derive the full benefit of the instruction.

Owls parent/guardian are notified that The Acorn School must report to the director of schools of the LEA in which the school is located the names, ages, and residences of all students in attendance at the school within thirty (30) days after the beginning of the school year. The Acorn School must make other reports of attendance in the school, including transfers of students, as may be required by the local board of education, the state board of education, or the department of education.

The Acorn School must make any necessary reports to the LEA regarding students with five or more unexcused absences.

Excused absences:

- Absence must be communicated within 24 hours to the school.
- Absence for reason of illness or the time necessary to comply with The Acorn School Well Child policies.
- A family trip of no more than ten consecutive days (e.g., for bereavement and/or international travel) communicated to the classroom teacher so that the student receives alternative assignments due within ten days of their return to school.

Unexcused absences:

- Absence not communicated within 24 hours.
- Absence without a given reason that meets the definition of an “excused absence.”

Information at this link: [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3007](#)