

IPS



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Introduction

IPS is a private licensed preschool approved by the Macedonian law for preschool education. It is committed to provide an enriching, stimulating, and supportive learning environment for young children. Our teaching philosophy is grounded in a profound respect for children and their immense potential to learn and grow. Taking advantage of children's natural curiosity, IPS provides many opportunities for them to discover the world around them and their special place within it. IPS helps children develop their skills and abilities in a variety of areas, enabling them to flourish as unique individuals and integrated members of society.

OUR VISION

International Preschool of Skopje enriches the mind, strengthens the character, and inspires the hearts of our students.

OUR MISSION

IPS lays the groundwork for a life-long love of learning by combining the benefits of multilingual and intercultural education, promoting international awareness.

We strive to provide opportunities to reach both the intrinsic and extrinsic educational potential of every student. We create global leaders who are compassionate learners, who engage, enlighten, empower and contribute to build a better world.

IPS promotes an environment where children become independent, confident, lifelong learners with a strong sense of self. We proudly offer a positive, child-centered preschool experience that fosters a love of learning in a nurturing community. In each child, we strive to cultivate:

Autonomy

A sense of belonging

Respect for others

Enthusiasm for exploration

IPS attributes much of its program's success to the close relations it fosters with and among member families. We are a close-knit community, and seek input from families to ensure that the program continues to respond to the needs of each child and group as a whole. Working together, teachers and families help IPS continue to provide an excellent learning environment for young children.

The policies in this brochure support and protect the values that have strengthened IPS for more than 20 years.

Again, welcome to our program. We look forward to learning and growing with your child!

IPS is a candidate school for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years and pursuing authorization as an IB World School.

IB World Schools share a common philosophy—a commitment to improve the teaching and learning of a diverse and inclusive community of students by delivering challenging, high quality programmes of international education that share a powerful vision.

Mission Statement from the IB

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become *active, compassionate and lifelong learners* who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

For further information about the IB and its programmes, visit www.ibo.org

Purpose of the Brochure

The purpose of this brochure is to provide families enrolled in the program with an overview of the International Playschool of Skopje, including our history, curriculum, administrative policies and procedures and other general information. The brochure is updated periodically and distributed to all IPS families.

Background Information

The International Playschool of Skopje is a private, English -language preschool open to children of all nationalities between all ages of 8 months and eleven years. IPS was first established in 1998 by Roberta Drummond, a Brazilian national temporarily residing in Skopje, in collaboration with Marija Mihailovic and Tanja Todorovski, two Macedonian university students, as a means of providing Ms. Drummond's children with a good nursery school education. Initially, the playgroup met at the Drummond house and included only the two Drummond children. The group grew quickly; however, as word spread among the Drummond's circle of friends and beyond and the program evolved to meet the changing needs of its students.

School Calendar

The IPS school year runs from September through August. Classes are held Monday through Friday with school hours from 7:45 am to 1:00 pm or 4:30 pm.

For the parents who will need to bring their children earlier than the above mentioned time, and pick them up later than 4:30 pm, IPS will organize extended hours for stay.

IPS observes the official Macedonian holidays and closed on these dates. IPS provides a year holiday calendar which is changeable.

IPS is closed for two weeks for the winter break.

Safety Codes and Instructions

IPS security system provides security code door locks which are changed periodically in order to keep the code protected. Regarding this matter all the parents are kindly requested to keep this information private because the safety codes are intended ONLY FOR THE PARENTS whose children are enrolled in IPS. This information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and any kind of sharing is not permitted.

Our Curriculum

The IPS curriculum reflects the philosophy of the program - to meet the learning needs of each child as an individual as well as that of the group as a whole. Utilizing wide variety of activities suitable for children from 8 months to 11 years of age, IPS teachers help each child fulfill his or her own potential. Within the structure of the daily classroom routine, children are able to direct their own course of play and learning experiences. At present, there are four classes for students, grouped according to age and development maturity:

- ❖ Level 1: 8 months and up;
- ❖ Level 2: 2 to 3 years old;
- ❖ Level 3: 3 to 4 years old;
- ❖ Level 4: 4 to 5 years old;
- ❖ Level 5: 5 to 6 years old;
- ❖ Level 6: 6 to 7 years old;
- ❖ Level 7: 7 to 8 years and up.

At present, enrolment in the IPS program is limited to 15 students in each group and two teachers per group who are responsible for the children.

IPS also holds a bilingual (English-Macedonian) program for Macedonian kids who is based on Macedonian national program. This program include 3 classes with maximum 16-17 kids with two leading teachers:

- ❖ Toddler class/ Level 2- (age 2-3),
- ❖ First Class/ Level 3 (age 3-4),
- ❖ Second Class /Level 4(age 4-6).

Daily Classroom Routine

A typical day at IPS generally adheres to the following routine (flexible):

7:45 - 9:30 Arrival time, Exploratory play
and breakfast

9:30 - 9:35 Clean up time

9:35 - 10:00 Morning meeting, Circle time,
Additional language

10:00 - 11:30 Inquiry Language/ Math/ Social Studies

11:30 - 12:00 Outdoor exploratory play

12:00 - 12:30 Read Aloud, Inquiry Expressive Arts

12:30 - 13:00 Lunch time

13:20 - 14:45 ASA/ Music, Visual Art, PE, Classical Ballet

14:45 - 15:30 Exploratory Play/ Free play until departure
(generally outside, weather permitting)

15:30- 16:30 Reflection & Sharing, Goodbye



After school activities and clubs (ASA):

The purpose of these activities is to satisfy the students' interest for certain contents and to express their creativity. Also to express their curiosity and autonomy in the application of acquired knowledge. All the after school activities will be held in English language.

- ** Ballet club
- ** Artistic creation club
- ** Dance and rhythm club
- ** Astronomy club
- ** Photography club
- ** Sport club
- ** Computers club
- ** Drama club
- ** Gardening club
- ** Second foreign language club
- ** Reading club
- ** Game club
- ** Science club
- ** Home work club

Language Policy

Statement of Belief

At IPS we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all students learning. This includes the ability to express oneself through speaking, reading, writing, drawing, acting, etc. This also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts.

At IPS is the language of instruction and is taught in a transdisciplinary manner to ensure learning experiences are relevant, meaningful and engaging. Oral, visual and written language is paramount to the development of language acquisition and are integral to all learning experiences. All teachers are responsible for language learning at IPS and believe we need to provide students with a learning environment and the necessary language support to enable them to participate fully in the academic programme and in the social life of the preschool, as well as develop as individuals.

Language learning is differentiated to meet individual student need and learning environments are inclusive of all students' cultural backgrounds and needs. Teachers believe that students learn through a gradual release of responsibility model, where modelled, shared, guided and independent learning experiences support all students to learn. We believe every learner benefits from experiencing an additional language as it develops effective communication skills and facilitates international mindedness. Also, success in mother tongue maintains cultural identity and is an indicator of success in acquiring other additional languages.

IPS is a culturally and linguistically preschool, which provides education for a 120 students, from 45 different nations at any one time. English and Macedonian are the languages of instruction and Spanish (Preschool-Year 6 and Year 5) is formally taught as an additional language.

IPS strongly believes that an open, continuous flow of information and communication between the home and school is in the best interest of every child and the programs a whole. IPS has established several means of promoting regular communication among and between parents/guardians and teachers. Suggestions on ways to further facilitate communication between home and school is always welcome.

Oral Language

The more opportunities and experiences we give children to develop and practise oral language skills, the more confident children become as language learners. Planned experiences in speaking and listening in an inquiry based approach allow for rich discussion and a collaborative approach to learning. Children are encouraged to ask questions, negotiate, socialise, inquire and experiment in a range of settings that allow their ideas, opinions and thinking to be heard. We know children come to school with different experiences of language and it is important to recognise family and cultural background, community and prior knowledge in establishing the needs of each student.

Written Language

‘Reading is a developmental process that involves constructing meaning from text’ (PYP Scope and Sequence pg.15). At IPS there is a focus on language acquisition through developing lifelong reading habits and meeting the individual needs of each child. Teachers plan and deliver learning experiences using a range of reading procedures and strategies from the First Steps Reading programme.

Visual Language

‘The processes of viewing and presenting allow students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs’ The ability to interpret data, communicate and construct meaning are invaluable lifelong skills (PYP Languages Scope and Sequence, pg. 11). At IPS environmental print and visual imagery play a vital role in enriching the learning environment, developing learners ability to critically analyse images and apply his/her understanding to make meaning. The use of graphic organisers, picture books, art work, posters, magazines, comic strips and video clips are integral in all Units of Inquiry. The ability to view and present using a multi modal approach is explicitly taught and students are given choice in presenting their ideas and knowledge.

School language profile

To compile the school language profile, the International Preschool of Skopje identifies the following points:

The diversity of language needs for all learners include:

Information on the languages of teaching and learning, the languages of communication used in the school and outside the classroom, and the range and types of mother tongue in the community.

Medium of instruction - English (all subjects).

Inside the classrooms / English. However in the pre primary & primary classes the students use their mother tongue and English to comprehend read and express their understanding. The teachers too can avail the use of technology as well as print media (in mother tongue) to facilitate the understanding of a concept, or sharing their understanding. The students do have the opportunity to use their mother tongue / host country language to demonstrate understanding during an assessment task.

Outside the classrooms / Students will be and are encouraged to communicate in the language that is comfortable to them. This will help us to create an environment, which will foster the development of Mother Tongue.

Languages learnt / offered at all levels-

PYP- English, Macedonian, Spanish as additional languages

Language of communication

Official communication- English

Language of communication in classroom-English with mother tongue support (need based)

Language of communication outside the classroom- English, Macedonian, Spanish

Wide range of mother tongue languages identified

Other language needs of the community.

Interacting with auxiliary staff- Most of the Auxiliary staff comes from local community.

The mode of communication with them will generally be in Macedonian

Interacting with visitors-Visitors in school come with diverse language backgrounds. English will be used as the language of Communication. But we may also use other languages based on the needs and availability.

Interacting with parents- Most of the Communication with parents will be in English. The school will also communicate in Macedonian based on the need of the situation. Working Language- English

Access Language- English and Macedonian

Internal Working Language- English and Macedonian

Support for Language Learners

Our teachers are working to create a caring language community to enhance the language learning of all students. The International Preschool of Skopje attempts to promote a language-rich environment for all students through the implementation of technology, multimedia and library resources. We ask that teachers be well informed of their students who have language needs and other language abilities.

The International Preschool of Skopje encourages families to continue mother tongue development at home; support is given to students whose mother tongue is a language other than English. IPS provides qualified staff. We also provide support through our parent body (those who speak the same language) and through our professional staff. This includes a Spanish teacher, a German teacher, and several staff members who speak additional languages.

Language in the Classroom

In the classroom, language is supported through various literacy activities such as guided reading, writer's workshop, writing in content, classroom libraries, visuals, instructional vocabulary, individual word lists, daily read aloud and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration.

In the Kindergarten classes' students take part in play-based learning, developing early literacy and numeric concepts and communication skills which help their reading and writing ability. Our kindergarten program provides opportunities for learning, self-expression and self discovery in a variety of areas in music, drama, games, science and language activities assisted by the teachers.

IPS has chosen to implement the play-based learning framework for Preschool. It is a comprehensive system of learning based on research and knowledge regarding all areas of student development – social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language.

While planning and carrying out a task the children are also using symbols to represent their ideas, practicing the language skills.

Our play-based curriculum offers students many opportunities for positive interactions with other students and adults. We treat each student with respect and reinforce his/her value as an individual and as a unique member of the IPS community.

The focus of the learning is for the experience to be relevant, engaging and challenging to each student.

Language and the Program of Inquiry

Language is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking, key concept questions, and extended research all lend themselves to having a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral, visual, and written language is all present within planner activities. Literature selections both in read-aloud and guided reading are chosen to build an understanding of the concepts within the planners.

There are monthly rotations of integrated specials throughout all groups. This would include the language of visual art, music, Spanish, and PE (movement) co-teaching with classroom teachers to incorporate their specific areas of knowledge and encourage connections with the POI planners.

Additional Language

Macedonian and Spanish are the second languages taught to students through several formats. Each student in K-4 attends a 45 minute Spanish class twice per week. In addition, students in K-3 have a weekly 35-minute multi-modality experience when Spanish is combined with art, music, movement and cultural learning.

English as an Additional language (EAL)

The teachers at IPS recognise the need to value the students' home languages as both an important part of their identity and as a useful tool to access English. It develops flexible thinking and open mindedness amongst all children. They realise that it is critical to build relationships with parents/carers as well as using knowledge of the students' cultural and educational backgrounds when planning and developing appropriate teaching and learning experiences. There is clear understanding amongst teacher that they need to provide a culturally inclusive curriculum.

While students spend time with their class teachers, the EAL teacher plays an important role, welcoming new families to the school and doing the initial assessment of the student's current language levels and needs. The EAL teacher assists the family in completing the enrolment procedures, organising uniforms, books packs, bus tickets etc.

Assessment Policy

Assessment is integral to evaluating our attainment of the goals, objectives, and standards within the IPS... Teachers have the central role in using **assessment** to support continuous learning and to evaluate student achievement. Assessment of students is an essential component in evaluating our degree of success in attaining our instructional mission which is to challenge all students to become life-long learners and active participants in the global community.

Assessment

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at various stages in the learning

process. It is the means by which we analyze student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice. It is central to our goal of guiding the child, from novice to expert, through the learning process.

Assessing – we discover what students have learned

Recording – we make note of our findings about what students have learned

Reporting – we pass that information on to parents, administration and other parties directly involved in students' learning

Assessing – How do we discover what the students have learned?

Assessment is something that occurs every day in some fashion. The use of a variety of assessment tools demonstrates our belief that students learn in different ways, at different rates, and at different times. The result of assessment is considered a critical element that influences teacher decision-making and guides student learning.

Assessment in the Classroom

Forms of assessment within individual classrooms include both formative and summative instruments and are tailored to meet different modalities and individual needs. These include, but are not limited to:

Pre-assessment – knowledge of a student's prior knowledge should drive the instruction within the classroom.

Formative assessment – Informal assessment is done constantly throughout the grading periods. This can be accomplished by use of running records, anecdotal notes, checklists, completion of simple graphic organizers or, in some cases, quizzes.

It can also be accomplished through regular student reflection, both oral and written. Formative assessments in relation to the lines of inquiry are developed as common assessments. Grade levels may also utilize common formative assessments in reading, writing, word study and math.

Summative assessment – Summatives are given to gauge the student's progress in major concepts or areas of instruction. They include the summative assessments focused on the central idea of each planner.

Self-Assessment and Reflection – Opportunities for self-assessment and reflection are given on a regular basis in classrooms, particularly as a part of the IB planners. Teachers then reflect on the student's reflection, and parents reflect on both of these reflections.

Self-assessments are a part of the student's portfolio.

Why do we assess?

-To promote continuous student learning and growth

-To guide children through the five essential elements of learning contained in the PYP (concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and action) -To celebrate what students can do

- To set goals and plan for future student growth
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the learning program.

When does assessment take place in IPS?

Assessment is a continuous process that allows teachers, parents and children to identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, as well as the effectiveness of the program. It is a daily activity at IPS and takes various forms. There are two main categories of assessment.

Formative Assessment is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what children already know, understand and can do in order to plan for further student learning and growth. Formative assessment occurs throughout a learning unit or process.

Summative Assessment takes place at the end of a learning unit or process. It is a chance for students, teachers and parents to evaluate progress and demonstrate what has been learned over the course of time. It is a formal ending point to a taught unit or of a process but not necessarily the end of student learning in the areas being assessed.

Recording – How do we collect and analyze the data?

Assessment strategies and tools form the basis of a comprehensive approach to assessment and represent the school's answer to the question —How will we know what we have learned?! The strategies are the methods or approaches that teachers use when gathering information about a student's learning. Teachers' record this information using a variety of tools, which are the instruments, used to collect data.

Assessment Strategies

-Observations: All students are observed regularly with a focus on the individual, the group, and/or the whole class.

-Performance Assessments: Students are presented with a task that represents the kind of challenges that adults face in the world beyond the classroom. It requires using a repertoire of knowledge and skills to accomplish a goal or solve an open-ended problem. In addition, it entails the thoughtful application of knowledge rather than recalling facts. It has an identified purpose or audience, involves a realistic scenario, it has an established criteria and requires developing an authentic product or performance.

-Transdisciplinary Skills Assessments (Research, Thinking, Communication, Self-Management and Social Skills): The focus is on the process and skill application rather than on the product. These skills are regularly observed in real contexts using checklists and anecdotal records.

-Open-Ended Assessments: Students are presented with a challenge and asked to provide an original response.

-Selected Response Assessments (Tests/Quizzes): These single-occasion assessments provide a snapshot of students' specific knowledge.

-Portfolios: An ongoing, purposeful collection is composed of selected student work and is designed to demonstrate growth, creativity, and reflection.

How do teachers record student progress?

A range of assessment formats is used to represent a balanced view of each child and what they know, understand and can do in light of the content being assessed. Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to record student progress in the PYP, including: rubrics,

checklists, continuums, task or subject-specific criteria, forms, benchmarks/exemplars and narrative records.

Assessment Tools

-Rubrics: Rubrics are established sets of criteria used for scoring or rating student's tests, portfolios, or performances. The descriptors tell the student and the assessor what characteristics or signs to look for in the work and then how to rate that work on a predetermined scale. Rubrics can be developed by students as well as by teachers.

-Benchmarks/Exemplars: These are samples of student's work that serve as concrete standards against which other samples are judged. Benchmarks/Exemplars can be used in conjunction with rubrics or continuums. Benchmarks should be appropriate and useable within a particular school context.

-Checklists: These are lists of information, data, attributes, or elements that should be present.

-Anecdotal Records: Anecdotal records are brief, written notes based on observations of students. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.

-Continuums: These are visual representations of developmental stages of learning. They show a progression of achievement or identify where a student is in a process.

Classroom Assessments

- Critique
- Discussion
- Lab report
- Observations of behaviour
- Peer collaboration
- Portfolio and project
- Presentation
- Written response
- Teacher-generated tests
- Publisher-generated tests
- Questioning
- Rubric
- Student self-assessment
- Homework

According to IPS Homework shall refer to those assignments to be prepared by the student outside of the school. Homework is broadly defined as student learning activities conducted outside of school hours under the guidance parents/ guardians. Homework should be an extension of learning opportunities. Homework need not be exclusively —paper and pencil activities; it can include a wide variety of student learning activities related to the curriculum under study.

The assignment of homework, then, shall be done according to these guidelines:

Homework should be a properly planned part of the curriculum, extending and reinforcing the learning experience of the school.

Homework should help develop the student's responsibility by providing an opportunity for the exercise of independent work and judgment.

Teachers may provide options and alternative ways for students to complete their homework assignments.

The number, frequency, and degree of difficulty of homework assignments must be based on the ability and needs of the student.

Worksheets and other types of short-term, skill-building, practice- and reinforcement-oriented assignments have a place, but should not be the only homework given.

As a valid educational tool, homework should be clearly assigned and the results carefully evaluated.

Reporting – How do we choose to communicate information about assessment?

Reporting on assessment is about communicating what students know, understand and can do. It describes the progress of the students' learning, identifies areas for growth, and contributes to the efficacy of the programme. Reporting may take many forms including conferences and written reports.

Effective reporting should:

- involve parents, students and teachers as partners.
- reflect what the school community values.
- be comprehensive, honest, fair and credible.
- be clear and understandable to all parties.
- allow teachers to incorporate what they learn during the reporting process into their future teaching and assessment practice.

Conferences: The purpose of conferences is to share information between teachers, students and parents. These conferences may take a formal or informal structure.

-Teacher–Student: These are designed to give students feedback so they can reflect on their work and further refine and develop their skills. These individual conferences occur frequently in order to support and encourage the student's learning and teacher planning.

-Teacher–Parent(s): These are designed to give the parents information about the student's progress development and needs, and about the school's programme.

-Student-Led: Student-led conferences involve the student and the parent. The students are responsible for leading the conference, and also take responsibility for their learning by sharing the process with their parents. It may involve students demonstrating their understanding through a variety of different learning situations. There may be several conferences taking place simultaneously.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

IPS is a nonsectarian preschool. IPS admits students of any race, color, religion, and national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities and does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Staff Qualifications

Every year, the director, teachers, and assistant teachers must complete a required number of continued training hours. All of the staff have experience working with young children in a supervised program. In addition, our staff members truly love and understand child development and our play-based philosophy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. IPS takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. IPS recommends that conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the IPS community. Discussions in the hallways should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that this parent first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to a successful preschool program.

School - Wide (Nonemergency) Information:

The IPS office communicates with parents in a number of ways:

E-mail

Telephone or IPS website

Notices sent home in children's backpacks

IPS strongly believes that an open, continuous flow of information between the home and school is in the best interest of every child and the programs a whole. IPS has

established several means of promoting regular communication among and between parents/guardians and teachers. Suggestions on ways to further facilitate communication between home and school is always welcome.

Daily: Parents/Guardians and teachers have the opportunity to discuss briefly any issue related to the children or the program during drop-off and pick-up times. Should a lengthy, detailed discussion be necessary, however, an appointment should be made outside class time.

Weekly: Folder Every Friday, teachers send home folders with each child containing his/her artwork from the week. Please return the empty folder to the classroom the following Monday so your child can fill it up again with his/her new masterpieces.

Homework Folder: Twice a week the Older Levels will have a Homework Folder sent home with his/her homework in it. Please return the homework and folder when your child has completed his/her work.

Monthly Calendar: During the first week of each month, IPS teachers distribute calendars denoting each day's planned theme and activities for that month.

IPS Parent-Teacher Meeting: The IPS Meeting is a periodic event at which parent/guardians and teachers discuss any and all issues relevant to the school as a whole. The meeting is open to IPS staff and the parents/ guardians of children currently enrolled in the program.

Each meeting participant has the right to propose topics for discussion for the agenda, debate any issue on the agenda, and cast a vote when group decisions are required. In these cases, a majority vote wins.

Teachers are responsible for scheduling the IPS Meeting date and time, preparing the agenda, and facilitating the meeting discussions. Any parent or guardian wishing to submit a topic for the agenda should do so with as much anticipation as possible or at least two days before the meeting date.

Family workshops: Every month IPS organizes a family workshop. All the parents are welcomed to join it and spend some time with the other parents.

Family Contact Information List: To encourage communication among families, IPS provides parents/guardians with contact information for all those children enrolled in the Program.

Please be sure to check the contents of your child's backpack each night so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.

Admissions Policy

IPS admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin. If parents have any major educational, social, or developmental concerns about their child entering IPS, parents need to discuss these concerns with the director before the child's first day of class. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment be established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, IPS reserves the right to place children in classes by age, and developmental level. IPS does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Application for admission into the International Playgroup of Skopje is open to all children ages 8 months to 11 years. Admission into the IPS program is determined by the classroom teachers in accordance with the following basic criteria:

- The child is between ages 8 months and 11 years by September 1 of the school year.
- The child exhibits a sufficient level of maturity to function in a group setting.
- There is available space in the class.

In the event that no spaces are available in a class, candidates for enrolment can add their names to the Waiting List.

In general, admission into the program is prioritized in the following way:

1. Children already in the group who are re-enrolling for the next academic year or who are moving up from the younger group to the older is given first priority.
2. Children with siblings enrolled in the playgroup are given second priority.
3. Once students falling under the first two priority categories are enrolled, as a general rule, IPS follows a first-come-first-serve basis for admitting children on the Waiting List into the program. Certain situations may arise, however, in which exceptions are made to this rule. For example, children on the Waiting List who are closest in age to the group's average age might take priority over other children on the Waiting List, regardless of the order in which they were placed on the Waiting List. In the event that program will be determined by the teachers based on an evaluation of their ability to fit the existing group.

Once a child is enrolled in the program, her/his place is guaranteed for the upcoming academic year program provided the family continues to make tuition payments each trimester. See the section on Tuition Fees in this handbook for more information on IPS tuition policy.

School Bus

IPS offers School Bus service for both pick-up and drop off. The timing of the drop-off and pick up varies depending on the number of children and the route. Children will be picked up from home between 8:00 and 8:30 am. There are two options for the end of the day depending on whether your child stays until 1:00 or 3:00 pm.

FOOD AT IPS

Parent can either prepare homemade snack or lunch or utilize the catering service. IPS offers the food service.

NO NUT POLICY

We ask that parents of all children not send any food or food product that lists peanuts and/or tree nuts on the ingredient label. IPS has adopted a **“No Peanuts or Tree Nuts at School”** policy. We ask that parents carefully monitor foods being packed in lunch boxes to ensure that no peanuts, peanut oils, or other nuts or nut oils are among the foods selected (allergy-wise, coconuts are considered a fruit and are okay). **Food labels/ingredients may change over time**, so it is always recommended that you read the label before purchasing snacks. **Please read labels carefully to make sure the products are nut free. This includes labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts,” “May contain traces of almond,” “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts,” and so forth.** Rule of thumb: if in doubt, make another choice.

In classrooms where children have potentially life-threatening sensitivities, IPS may consider additional safety measures and address the situation on a room-by-room basis. **Food and baked goods need to be store-bought only and not prepared at home.** Food sent to IPS for special occasions (birthdays, class parties, etc.) must be free of all nut ingredients and a list of those ingredients given to the teacher.

Parents of children with allergies are asked to provide a supply of safe treats to be used in lieu of store-bought and bakery-prepared items. Talk with your child and help him/her understand that food sharing is not allowed. This is a preventative safety measure to reduce food allergy exposures.

Hand washing and tabletop washing are additional risk-reduction measures that are used at IPS. Parents can help by ensuring adequate hand and face washing at home before arrival at school.

BIRTHDAYS AND CLASS PARTIES POLICY

Simple birthday snacks may be provided by parents to recognize children’s birthdays. Please set a date with the teacher one week in advance. Less notice may result in a date other than your first choice. This time is necessary to assess the safety of all children who use your child’s classroom, primarily with regard to life-threatening allergies. Be prepared to tell the teacher the snack that you would like to serve so that other parents can send a safe alternate treat, if needed. Snacks provided by families must be store bought and should be small portions (one cookie, mini-muffin, doughnut hole, etc.). Store-bought foods provided for birthdays must be preceded by a complete list of ingredients, submitted to the teacher at least two class days before the food is served.

Each class will have its own distinct way, determined by the teacher, to honor birthdays. We ask that parents not distribute favors, goody bags, or paper goods. Also, IPS will not be able to distribute birthday party invitations. This includes parents putting invitations in cubbies.

For information about bringing food for birthday and classroom parties, please make sure to review the “Food at IPS” section. In accordance with our **Class Party and Birthday policy**, only store-bought foods can be served, and the food provided must be preceded by a completed list of ingredients and food label notifications, submitted to the teacher **at least 2 class days** before the food is served. Food must adhere to our nut-free policy.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Advance planning is vital to the safety of our children and to smooth daily classroom procedures.

Positive discipline policy

IPS is committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment for all children. The school’s behavior policy encourages children to develop social skills that reflect many of IPS’s values, including self-control, respect for others, and a positive self-esteem.

Teachers model appropriate behavior and guide positive interactions among children and adults. Nurturing these social skills is a central component of IPS Curriculum, and it helps children grow as successful, lifelong learners.

IPS’s commitment to an age-appropriate and play-based curriculum ensures that activities are child centered and promote positive social interactions. Teachers carefully craft the environment, communicate and enforce clear boundaries and expectations for behavior, and use nonverbal cues and/or redirect a child’s behavior to foster success.

When a problem arises, the teacher relies on modeling appropriate behavior, teaching peacemaking skills, and presenting stories or scenarios that reinforce the desired behavior. Children learn to make suitable choices and develop techniques for regaining self-control when they feel frustrated. Instructive and individually appropriate consequences help to strengthen the child’s self-control and self-esteem.

When a child experiences a particularly challenging time, the school encourages parents and teachers to work together and develop appropriate strategies. If a specific circumstance needs attention, the teacher will follow these procedures:

The teacher will observe and document a child’s behavior.

The teacher will discuss the child’s behavior with a parent and inform him or her of learning-based strategies the teacher will implement. The teacher will discuss options with the director.

The teacher will follow up with the parent about how these strategies are influencing the behavior.

If concern persists, a conference will be held with teacher, parent, and director to discuss options to help the child further develop appropriate social skills.

Staff members will make reasonable effort to work with the child and his/her family to resolve behavioral concerns. At any time, an individual plan of action may need to be implemented, depending on the severity of the concern. If needed, there is opportunity for teachers and the director to seek support from outside resources. The plan may include removal of a child from the classroom and/or calling the parent to take the child home. Repeated severe problems may result in IPS excluding a child from attending IPS.

What to Bring

Please remember to label each item that your child brings to school (lunch box, backpack, coat, sweater, hat, mittens, boots, etc.).

*** Dress**

Your child should be dressed for active and participatory play. IPS does not want a child's creativity hampered because he/she is wearing clothing that should not get dirty.

Children go outside most days, so please dress your child appropriately.

In the winter, hat and mittens are needed every day. Snow pants and warm boots are important whenever there is snow on the ground.

*** Extra Clothes**

In school, at all times, each child should have at least one set of seasonal clothes that fit – pants, shirt, underwear, socks — which should remain in the child's backpack. In addition, each child must have a change of clothes. Please provide a plastic storage box for extra clothing and other items.

*** Backpack**

At IPS we encourage children to be independent. Therefore, we strongly recommend a backpack that is easy for your child to manage when putting away his/her own things.

HEALTH POLICY

Illness

Germs spread quickly in a preschool environment. All children and staff stay healthier when sick persons stay at home. Common sense must prevail in the case of colds, which can range from a mild case of sniffles to a full-blown sinus infection or deep cough.

We use the EMERGENCY FORM to contact parents or another designated adult if your child develops symptoms of illness while in class. We will isolate your child in a comfortable, supervised place until he/she can be picked up.

If one or more of the following symptoms is present in your child, we will call you to pick up your child from preschool:

- temperature higher than 100° F
- loss of appetite
- nausea or vomiting
- red, pink, or crusted eyes o stomach ache
- earache o diarrhea
- rash/infection of skin o pale or flushed face o headache
- thick or greenish mucus from nose o cough
- loss of energy/decrease in activity/falling asleep o sore throat

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO PARTICPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.

24 HOUR RULE: ANY CHILD WHO HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN THE PREVIOUS 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND CLASS.

Fever free: A child should be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever - reducing medicine.

Antibiotic timeline: A child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school

We strictly observe this health department regulation for children (and staff) to protect the health of everyone at IPS.

Parent must notify the office immediately if a child:

Is diagnosed with any communicable diseases including strep throat, pink eye, lice, pinworms, or any other of the diseases common to a school environment. The notification is important so that IPS can inform the parents within your child's classroom to be on the lookout for symptoms. Please remember that IPS will not release the name of the child or family involved. We simply post "There has been a case of _____ reported"

Has any **allergies** or if you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's health.

Is taking **medication**, as medicine may affect your child's behavior.

If a child is absent for three days or more due to illness, the parent must provide a written statement from the physician stating that the child is well enough to return to school.

Unless we receive a doctor's note requesting a child to stay indoors, we expect every child to participate in outdoor play.

Head lice sometimes occurs in school because it is contagious and easily passed from child to child. You may want to look online for more information and to find examples of what lice look like in order to check your child's head correctly (www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment).

Please inform us immediately if your child has lice. We are required by licensing to follow certain procedures regarding the cleaning and removal of materials (dress - ups, etc.) within a classroom with lice.

We also reserve the right to implement additional procedures, such as head checks, if a persistent lice problem was to occur. Please get into the habit of routinely checking your child's head. If all parents check heads regularly, we can avoid any outbreaks in the school.

In accordance with Macedonian law for all certified nursery/pre -school facilities, IPS organizes periodical medical examinations for all children and teachers that, includes a nose and throat swab and optional blood test*. The first examination is scheduled for the beginning of September and second test is conducted after the winter break. If any child's test results show positive for bacterial infections at either of these mandatory tests the child will be required to stay at home until s/he produces a negative result, or following the first 24 hour period of a medical treatment.

In addition, if a teacher notes that your child is not feeling well and shows any of the above symptoms of sickness during the day, they will immediately call the parents/guardian to come and pick him/her up within 1 hour.

All parents/guardians are kindly asked to adhere to the IPS health measures to help keep IPS a safe and healthy environment for children and teachers alike. If any parent/guardian is found to be negligent of these measures, IPS teachers have the right not to accept the child at school until their symptoms have improved per the above recommendations.

* The costs of this mandatory tests needs to be covered by the parents. All subsequent testing arrangements and costs is the responsibility of the individual parent/guardian.

Medications

To ensure the safety and well-being of our children, IPS teachers will not administer any medications to a child unless specifically directed to do so by the child's parent or guardian. In this case, parents and guardians should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Please do not send medications in snack bags! Hand them over directly to the teacher in charge. She will keep them in a safe place out of reach of the children.
- The medication to be administered must be in the original container.
- The label should contain the child's full name, name of medication, schedule of administration, dosage and date.

Accidents and injuries

The IPS lead teachers are trained to perform basic First Aid in the event of an accident or injury. A well-stocked First Aid kit is readily available in the classroom. In the case of a serious accident or injury, IPS teachers will immediately contact the child's parents or guardian or, in their absence, the designated emergency contact person. All accidents and injuries are recorded in an Incident Report, which is then shown to the parent or guardian who is asked sign off on it.

Emergencies

IPS has an emergency preparedness plan that provides guidelines for a wide range of unlikely emergency situations from a naturally occurring weather condition to a terrorist attack. The safety of the children and staff is always the school's primary concern.

The staff members take emergency preparedness training and maintain an emergency preparedness plan for the school. Staff undergo emergency training every year, and the school runs two emergency evacuation drills in addition to monthly fire drills with the children.

Types of Emergencies

The types of emergencies that IPS prepares for include fire and explosions, severe storms, flooding, winter storms, earthquakes, unexpected utility failures, hazardous and radioactive materials, terrorism and other potentially violent situations, medical emergencies, and family/community concerns and/or violence.

Communication with parents of an Emergency Situation

IPS will communicate with parents during an emergency through either a text message sent to cell phones and/or a phone call from a member of IPS staff and/or email. If possible, staff will leave a message or a sign on the door.

Emergency Phone Contact Information for Each Child

IPS maintains emergency phone and email lists to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as a school closing or an evacuation. The Emergency Preparedness Information Form and the Emergency Form will be supplied during the enrollment process. These forms must be completed and returned to the office before the child's first day of class. It is important, if possible, that parents provide an emergency phone that can receive text messages. If your phone cannot receive text messages, please let IPS know so that the school can make other arrangements for reaching you.

The **Emergency Preparedness Information Form** includes at least one out-of-area contact and information for three local emergency contacts.

The **Emergency Form** includes the name and phone number of the child's local physician. The preschool has the right to call the physician or other emergency personnel in case of emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep emergency information up to date.

Field Trips

Field trips can be an important enriching experience for our children. Teachers plan trips appropriate for their class that will provide a well-rounded experience.

Information and permission slips will be sent home in school bags each time a field trip is planned. In order to attend a field trip, each child needs a signed permission slip and/or payment of any necessary fee.

No siblings may accompany you and your child on the field trip. A sibling is a distraction for the chaperoning parent and for the group and can present a liability for everyone.

Cell phones must be turned off while driving and should only be used for emergencies on field trips.

Playground

Whenever parents are on the playground with their child or other children, parents are responsible for supervision of their own child or children after school hours. Please do not leave a child or children alone or unsupervised on the playground at any time.

IPS asks that all children, under the supervision of their parents, abide by the same guidelines that we use during the school hours while using the playground with their children after school hours. These guidelines include:

The slide is a “down” slide, so children should be going feet first —on bottoms or stomachs. No head first. Children should slide to the bottom of the slide and move out of the way for the next person and should not be standing on or jumping off the slide.

Absolutely no tree climbing. This includes trees between the parking lot areas.

No climbing on top of the house--“the climber is for climbing” is the language we use during the school day.

Playing in the bushes is not allowed.

If your child is on the playground, you need to be with him/her to make sure that he/she is following these rules and that you are enforcing them to support our teachers during the school day.

It is important that the children have consistent rules for both school and non -school hours to ensure their safety during the school day. This way, they have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and manageable in a group care situation such as ours.

Volunteer Opportunities

IPS encourages parents to become involved in the preschool. Teachers regularly include parents in special celebrations and welcome parents who want to share special talents with the class. IPS also asks that parents share their talents and time to help make the school the special community it is. Here are some ways you can help:

Class representative/room parent
Fundraising
Computer (website, assisting staff with database software, etc.)
Library support

Fundraising

IPS holds fundraising events to earn money for specific improvements or classroom equipment. These fundraisers will be outlined in written communication. We request that families participate in these events and, in so doing, promote community spirit and financially support our high-quality program.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

IPS recognizes that, at times, parents or guardians may be dissatisfied with some aspect of the school's program or administration. In these cases, parents/guardians should take the following steps:

1. Talk over the area of concern directly with the involved party (teachers, Coordinator, or other parent/guardian).
2. If the matter is not sorted out to the parent's or guardian's satisfaction, s/he should put the matter in writing to the IPS Coordinator who will then set up a meeting to discuss the issue further.

