

World Academy of Tirana

**School Handbook
2011 - 2012**



International
Baccalaureate

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The World Academy of Tirana

Dear Parents: Welcome to The World Academy of Tirana. Please take time to read this handbook thoroughly, and then keep it in a handy place for frequent reference. All parents are expected to be familiar with the school policies and to abide by them.

Aims

The World Academy of Tirana, known as The Academy, exists to educate and inspire young children so that they grow into active, compassionate adults. Our ambition is that they will become lifelong learners who encompass the knowledge of how to relate harmoniously with other people, cultures, and the environment. The Academy encourages independent, self-directed learning within a child-centered international community valuing peace, respect for others and pride in individual achievements as well as differences.

To achieve these aims we:

- Provide a truly international education based upon the world renowned International Baccalaureate curriculum
- Help students achieve academic excellence and gain an internationally recognized qualification
- Provide high quality teaching
- Nurture children so that they are happy at school and actively involved in their own learning
- Develop healthy relationships and respect between all members of the school community
- Create internationally minded citizens who recognize commonalities and differences between cultures in the hope that they will bridge cultural divides and help create a more peaceful world
- Encourage children to care for their environment

At the school there are two buildings, the first is known as Early Years (ages 9 months – 6 years old), and the second is Elementary (ages 6 – 11 years old).

Between the ages of 9 months and 5 years, children are taught according to the Montessori Method. There are two classes, Infant Community and Casa.

"The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. This is the time when man's intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed. At no other age has the child greater need of intelligent help...." *Maria Montessori*.

At the age of 5, parents may choose to leave their child in the Montessori Casa class or move him/her to the IB Pre-Elementary class. Following Pre-Elementary, there are 6 classes, Grades 1-6 located in The Elementary building.

Arrival and registration

Arrival: Children should be at school no earlier than 8:15 and no later than 9:00am. Any child arriving at school before 8.15 am may not be supervised by an adult. They are ready to start classes at 8:25am.

Registration: Children in Early Years are received in reception by an Assistant Teacher who takes them to class. Parents are asked not to progress beyond the ground floor reception area.

Lateness and Absences

Lateness :

Registration is completed at 8:25am. You are requested to make sure that your child arrives on time. The beginning of the day is an important time as it allows students to build their social skills and relationships with their teacher and peers, but also ensures they are informed of the daily schedule/routine.

Absences :

Holidays should be taken during vacations as notified on the school calendar. If your child is going to be absent please let us know by telephoning the School Office (042 444 014 / 042 444 336) before 8:30am; please give us your child's name, her/his class, the reason for absence and the anticipated length of absence. If your child's absence is to be prolonged, the school should be informed in writing. We require a medical certificate for absence of more than 2 days.

Early and Late Pick Up

Early pick up: If you are picking up your child early, you must fill the "Early Child Pick-Up Authorization Form", include your name, name of the adult collecting the child, time, and reason as indicated on the form which is available in the School Office.

Late pick up: Parents are asked to be prompt when collecting their child. In respect of children who attend part-time, please be aware that a fee of 2€ per half hour is payable for late pick up.

Departure

The Half Day Programme at the Early Years ends at 12:30pm. School finishes at 3:30pm at which time children should be picked up from the school, except for the students who take language lessons from 3:30pm until 4:30pm. Only parents, or authorized adults nominated in the application form, may collect the children from school. Please note that once your child has been collected, they are no longer the responsibility of the school, even if they remain on school premises.

School day

- Arrival
- Registration
- Lessons / Activities
- Morning snack
- Lessons / Activities
- Lunch
- Sleep / Break
- Lessons / Activities
- Afternoon snack
- Pick-up

“Early Years”

Clothing

Children’s clothing should be simple clothes that allow a child to run, climb and play freely. Dresses are acceptable for girls or knee-length shorts and long pants. The Casa child should be able to dress and undress himself, without help. Avoid difficult snaps, belts, shoulder straps, or anything that your child cannot undo or do up himself. We strongly recommend that soft-soled shoes be worn to enable the children to participate effectively in activities which develop coordination. Hard leather-soled shoes and cowboy boots can be hazardous as well as defeat the purpose of these activities. There are many opportunities to get wet at school, and we ask that all children bring an extra set of clothes (socks too) with their name on them.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated with a “walk around the sun”. This celebration signifies the number of “trips” the child has traveled around the sun (in years). You may bring a simple snack to share with your child’s class.

Classroom Observations

All parents are invited to observe their child in class. The school will inform you when these observation sessions will start. You then need to sign up on the list in advance and pick up the “observation guidelines slip” at the office prior to the observation.

Parent – Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are conducted three times during the school year in November, April and June (see dates in Academic Calendar). Each conference lasts approximately 20 minutes. There will be a sign up sheet in the office where you can select the time period for your conference. It is important for your child that you attend these important meetings.

Teacher's Office Hours

Parents are welcome to discuss their child's progress, meeting individually with the class teacher. Parents will be informed of the teacher's individual office hours at the beginning of the school year.

Admission Policies

Infant Community: The child should be at least 9 months old.

Casa: The child should be at least 3 years of age or have previous Montessori experience. To take maximum advantage of the Montessori Method, including the kindergarten year, we recommend a three-year program.

- Children may be enrolled at any time during the school year.
- A tour with an administrator is arranged for both the child and the parents, with an observation inside the class, so parents can see firsthand how active learning occurs. This is the time to ask questions to determine how your child will fit into this environment.
- An interview is arranged between an administrator and parents to help get to know your child, and to explain about the Montessori Method and school policies.
- Students and siblings of those already attending the school will have first priority for the following year's enrollment. Parents will be notified of the dates for enrollment.
- If no spaces are available in the school, the child may be placed on a waiting list. To qualify for enrollment, the school must receive a completed application form and the 100 Euro non-refundable registration fee.
- *The Academy* is not equipped to accommodate disabled students or those with a severe special needs requirement.

Elementary

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Students should always show a willingness to learn and a desire to perform at the highest level they can. They should come to school, and to class, on time, fully equipped, with their homework done to the best of their ability, and in a frame of mind which allows them to work well.

Explained absences: These are parent-approved absences for illness or unavoidable legal or religious obligations. While we recognize the needs of a mobile international and multi-cultural community, we

strongly urge that non-emergency absences, especially medical and other service appointments, be avoided during the school day. In all cases, parents who wish to have their children excused for reasons other than illness must inform the school beforehand. Any absence from school results in the student missing classes. Parents must understand, therefore, that excessive absence, even for the best reasons, can cause a student to fail a class.

Explained absences do count towards a student's total number of absences.

Unjustifiable absences: These are absences where a student skips school or class. Students who are found absent without explanation will be referred to the Principal who will work with the student and parents to prevent further occurrences. Parents will be notified by e-mail and by phone of such absences.

Clothing

- At World Academy of Tirana no uniform is required. However, children are encouraged to come to school in comfortable, hardwearing clothing in which they can move freely.
- No headwear is allowed to be worn in the school buildings unless for religious reasons.
- Jewellery is discouraged (especially ear rings apart from studs or small hoops) for safety reasons.
- From Pre-Elementary upwards students should be able to dress themselves completely independently.

Clothing for PE

- P.E. will be three times a week.
- Loose clothing should be worn on days when your child has PE – shorts or jogging trousers.
- Appropriate foot wear should be worn on those days – trainers or sneakers (running shoes).
- Any student with an illness or injury on a PE day should have a note from either their parent or family doctor excusing them from PE.

Behaviour

The school is a positive means of encouraging appropriate behavior, in line with the PYP Learner Profile. It includes five statements which are written in a positive manner, and represent the desired behaviors and habits that students are expected to model and practice on a daily basis. We will consistently challenge students to consider their behavior and contributions to school life in terms of the Code of Conduct.

Elementary School Code of Conduct

- Be truthful; communicate honestly.
- Be actively engaged in learning; ask questions, listen to others, work together.
- Be caring, friendly, helpful and polite to others.
- Be responsible for personal property and for the property of others.
- Be respectful and sensitive to the needs of others.

Library

- Students will visit the Library on a regular basis.
- All students will borrow books to take home during this time.
- Parents and students are welcome to visit the library at other times.
- It is important that children return their borrowed books the following library session.
- A replacement fee will be charged for any lost or damaged books.

Report Cards

You will receive a report twice a year to inform you of your child's progress in all subjects. These will be sent home on the last day of the autumn and summer terms. Please read these carefully and discuss them with your child. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's report card please do not hesitate to speak to the teacher concerned.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences will be held once a year in February. This consultation serves as an opportunity for parents/carers and teachers to share information on your child's progress. All parents are expected to attend all of the conferences.

Homework

Homework is set Monday to Thursday, inclusive it should take about half an hour and the work set is an extension of an activity studied in maths, English or another topic. It is important that children, especially in the lower grades, read each day and parents can help by listening to their child. Reading to a child helps reinforce the pleasure to be had from a book and parents are encouraged to do this as often as possible.

After School Activities

The school provides a range of After School Activities for Grades Pre-Elementary – 5. Information will be sent out at the beginning of the school year with a timetable of activities taking place. Please note that you must register your child in advance.

These activities are done by outside teachers for an extra charge and there will be a fee.

Home/School Communication

- Students in Pre-Elementary and Grade 1, will have a home/school journal provided for communications.
- For Grades 1-5 students, teachers and parents should use their journal as a means of communication between home and school.
- Please refer to these regularly to stay informed of your child's homework tasks, school trips and any other important communications from your child's teacher.
- Your child should also be encouraged to check their journal on a nightly basis to ensure homework assignments are completed on time.
- Teachers will also send out regular communications to inform you of the learning taking place in class.
- Teachers will produce a newsletter to coincide with their Units of Inquiry.

Transportation

Transportation service is available for **Elementary Students only**. Application for the bus service should be made at the time of registration or before the beginning of the school year. However, if space is available, families may apply for this service during the school year. Bus routes are not published for security reasons. Traffic in Tirana is very heavy and often congested and there may be times when the bus will not be on time for this reason. Please be patient and wait with your child in the morning until the bus arrives and wait at the bus stop to greet your child after school.

Bus Guidelines:

- Children should be on time for pick-up in order to respect the school schedule and the other bus riders.
- Children should be in the company of an adult while waiting for the morning bus.
- Children must be met at the bus stop in the afternoon by a parent/guardian.
- In the event that the parent/guardian is not at the bus stop in the afternoon, the student will not get off the bus. The bus driver will finish the route and return to the school with the student, who will wait there to be picked up.
- In the interest of safety, all students must be seated facing forward and wearing seat belts while the bus is moving.
- Food and drink are prohibited on the bus.
- All expected behaviors outlined in the student code of conduct apply to bus riders.
- Children who are not respectful and do not follow bus rules will be warned first and will, if necessary, have a meeting with the Principal.
- Children who visit the Principal three times due to inappropriate behavior on the bus will no longer be permitted to travel on the WAT School bus.

Please take the time to review the above information with your child if they travel on the bus.

Admission Policies

- The decision to admit a student to *the World Academy of Tirana* is based on the availability of space at the appropriate grade level, the school's ability to meet each student's needs and the student's ability to fulfill our program requirements.
- New students are admitted **throughout the year**, provided there are places available and provided applicants have submitted a **complete application file** together with the mandatory and **non-refundable application fee of € 100 per child**.
- An interview is arranged between an administrator and parents to help get to know your child and introduce him/her to *The Academy*.
- While we understand that it is not always possible for overseas families to arrange a visit admissions interview at the school, it is always preferable to do so.
- Following a visit, you will receive a letter of offer. This will reserve a place for two weeks.
- There is no deadline for the submission of applications but we recommend that you send in your application as early as possible.
- Please note that incomplete applications cannot be processed.
- *The Academy* is not equipped to accommodate disabled students or those with a severe special needs requirement.

The Academy Policies

Food / Lunch

Students have a hot lunch supplied at the school. Information about the hot lunch program will be sent out to parents at the beginning of school year. If you have any questions please contact the School Office. We encourage our students to eat healthy and balanced lunches that should include fruit or vegetables. Students should not be sent to school with chocolates, sweets or candies. Please note that children may only eat food prepared on our premises.

Fieldtrips

- Fieldtrips are a very important part of the educational programme at the school. All trips are led by teachers but where appropriate or necessary, external professional guides may also be used to provide specialist skills or knowledge.
- Each class will take some field trips over the course of the school year. These are an integral part of the Units of Inquiry or specialist subjects.
- Parent volunteers may be requested to accompany field trips.
- Parents will be notified of each trip in advance. Individual permission slips must be signed and returned before the child can participate.

Social Events Policy

At social gatherings, parents are responsible for the care and safety of their children, both at the school and off school property.

School Nurse/Medication

World Academy of Tirana is very fortunate to have a full time qualified nurse. Parents should inform both the classroom teacher and the nurse of any special health information. It is essential for us to know of any allergies, short or long term health problems or medical conditions. If your child needs specific medication during the day it is important to communicate the instructions for administration of medication with the school nurse or class teacher. No medication is given to children in Early Years.

The school will contact you in the case of illness or injury that may require further observation at home. For this reason it is vital that the school has up to date records of telephone numbers and addresses. Please inform the School Office immediately of any change in contact details.

Sickness and Accidents Policy

There is a school nurse present at all times who is trained in health procedures. In case of accidents a first aid kit is maintained and kept in a location, not accessible to the children, within the classroom. In case of illness or injury, parents will be contacted immediately. Parents are asked in the application form for persons to notify in case of emergency when the school cannot reach parents. If necessary, a child would be transported by ambulance to the hospital.

Before starting at The Academy, each child must be immunized; parents are asked to bring a copy of the vaccination book for the registration process.

It is most important that children who are sick are not sent to school. This is for the good of your child as well as the welfare of the other children in the class. Sick children do not benefit from being in school, and can cause other children to become ill.

Children **will not be admitted** to school if they have the following symptoms:

- elevated temperature
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- pink eye with secretions

- evidence of chicken pox
- head lice or nits
- a contagious bacterial infection, e.g. strep

If such symptoms occur during school, the child must go home immediately. We will contact you, or if unable to reach you, we will contact the persons listed on your child's Application Form.

Medication: Many medications are now long lasting and may be administered in the mornings and again in the evenings. Please ask your doctor if it is possible to prescribe this type of medication because **school staff will not administer it in the Early Years.**

If your child has any contagious illness, please notify the School Office as soon as possible. This includes measles, mumps, scarlet fever and chicken pox. Lice and ringworm are also to be reported.

Payment Policies

- Parents may choose either to pay tuition by Term or Annually.
- Payments may be made in cash (at the school), by check or by bank transfer (including fees), to the School Bank Account.
- **A late payment fee** of 150 Euros will be liable for fees not settled in advance or on the first day of term.
- For *The Academy Early Years* students, fees may be paid monthly in advance in ten installments; this facility will incur on administration cost of 5%. Parents need to sign the "Financial Agreement Form".
- *The Academy* will suspend students whose monthly installments are not paid in full by the 1st day of the current month.

Discount Policy:

- A discount of 5% will be given for Annual Tuition payments **received on or before due dates.**
- Each second and third child will receive a 5% discount off the Annual Tuition fee.
- No discount is applied for "exceptional" monthly payments.

Late Enrollment:

- Students, who enroll during the school year, will pay pro-rata according to their starting date.

School Absences:

- Please keep in mind that enrollment in the school is for the **entire** academic year.
- The tuition is an ACADEMIC YEAR tuition and no adjustments or reductions are made for **any reason**, including sick days, breaks, family vacations or holidays.

- In the case where a student is absent for an entire school term and without any previous notification, for school fee purposes, the student is considered to be withdrawn. If re-enrolled, they will not be treated as a new student and no registration fee is required upon re-entry.

Exceptional Circumstances:

- If a student has to be withdrawn due to exceptional circumstances, such as sudden relocation, the fees already paid in full for the school year will not be refunded.

Campus Security

All visitors to the campus are required to report to the reception area, where they will receive a Visitor's Badge to be displayed at all times. It is important to close the entrance gates behind you at all times to ensure the security of the school. Students and parents should not open doors to visitors.

Parents should not enter classrooms, except at the invitation of teachers.

Complaints

In the event of a complaint, the parents should first seek to resolve the issue with the member of the staff concerned.

Should the matter not be resolved, then a complaint should be made, in writing, to the Principal who will adjudicate. If the complaint refers to the Principal, then it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Board, whose decision will be final.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

All students and members of the community have responsibilities and rights. A code of conduct for staff members exists as part of the Staff Handbook.

Students have the responsibility to:	Students have the right to:
Actively promote safe and clean practices whilst at school.	Learn and play in a safe and clean environment.
Participate in school activities to the best of their ability.	Learn and play in a supportive environment.
Respect the rights of others.	Be respected.
Care for school facilities in a respectful manner.	Access adequate and appropriate facilities.
Tolerate opinions of others.	Express their opinion.
Express themselves in a socially acceptable way.	Express themselves in an appropriate manner.
Allow others their privacy.	Privacy.
Respect the learning styles of peers.	Learning experiences which cater to individual requirements.
Parents have the responsibility to:	
Parents have the right to:	
Show respect towards staff, students and the wider community.	Be respected by staff, students and the wider community.
Model appropriate behavior, including language.	Be welcomed at our school.
Be available to discuss their child's Progress.	Have their child's full potential realized within the limitations of available resources.
Ensure their child is sent to school prepared to be involved in the formulation and support of school policy.	Meet with staff and discuss issues relating to school policy and procedure, their child's progress and reports.
Support programs developed by the school.	Have their opinions valued.