



# Handbook

updated fall 2022

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and

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## **Mission Statement**

As an integral part of the ministry of St. John's Episcopal Church, the preschool promotes physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual growth. The development of young children in our community occurs in a loving and creative atmosphere that reflects our Christian values.

## **Philosophy**

St. John's Preschool realizes that the first five years of a child's life are essential stages of spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. We offer a learning environment with low teacher-student ratios that builds on each child's strengths.

The full ministry of St. John's Episcopal Church is available to all preschool families.

*Welcome!*

## **Registration**

Children must be on schedule with immunizations against childhood diseases. Each child must have a copy of his or her immunization record on file with the school.

Children will be enrolled based on their age as of August 31<sup>st</sup> for the relevant year of admission. If the classes have specific needs, the class assignment of students is at the discretion of the Director.

Priority registration is for current students, their siblings, and members of St. John's Church. After priority registration is completed, the remaining spaces will be offered to children according to the date on which they were placed on the waiting list.

## **Tuition**

Yearly tuition is divided into 9 payments, with the first payment due May 1<sup>st</sup> and the remaining payments due August – March.

All tuition payments are auto-drafted on the 5th of each month. Payments will be auto-drafted on the next business day if the 5th of the month is on a weekend or holiday.

St. John's Preschool is a non-profit ministry and relies on tuition to cover our operating budget. Tuition is not based on attendance. We do not make deductions for absences, holidays, vacations, or school closures of any kind. Our budget is based on a one-year commitment from our families. Registration fees, supply fees, and tuition are non-refundable.

Please let the Preschool Director know if you are experiencing an unusual financial situation. We will work with families to make payment arrangements.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

Notice of withdrawal from the program should be given to the director 30 days in advance.

## **Preschool Hours**

Regular Preschool Hours are **8:30 am – 12:30. (doors open at 8:20)**

A late fee of \$5.00 will be assessed if your child is not picked up by 12:35 pm. An additional \$5.00 late fee will be assessed if your child is not picked up by 12:45.

## **Arrival and Dismissal Procedures**

Doors will open at 8:20 for drop-off and pick-up begins at 12:20. Please follow drop-off and pick-up procedures for the current year.

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent, we must receive written or verbal permission unless the designated person is listed as an *additional authorized pickup* in the ProCare app. Photo identification will be checked.

### **Reminders**

- Help us by not using your cell phone while driving in the parking lot.
- Help us by scheduling a conference or phone call if you need to speak with your child's teacher about an issue at length. During drop-off and pick-up, each teacher's attention needs to be focused on the children.

## **Communication**

Parent-Teacher communication is essential. At any time during the year, conferences may be scheduled by the teacher or at a parent's request. Please refrain from discussing any issues at length with the teachers during preschool hours or at drop-off and pick-up. Teachers may be reached via the ProCare app.

## **Inclement Weather Policy**

St. John's Preschool follows announcements for New Hanover County Public Schools. If:

- New Hanover County Public Schools CLOSE due to inclement weather, we will be CLOSED.
- New Hanover County Public Schools have a delayed opening; we will open on the same delayed schedule. For example, If NHCS has a 2-hour delay – SJP will open at 10:30. Pick-up time will remain the same.

We do not schedule make-up days for school closings.

## **Snacks and Lunches**

Children need to bring a snack, lunch, and water bottle to preschool daily. The younger classes may have parents sign up for a “snack week” instead of having each child bring a snack from home each day.

Please make sure to clean and sanitize your child’s lunch box and water bottle each day.

## **Birthdays**

We enjoy sharing and celebrating the most precious day of your child’s year. Your child’s teachers will include activities that make him/her feel special. We ask that celebrations at school be limited to a special type of snack. We do not allow balloons, favors, party hats, or presents. Please discuss any birthday plans with your child’s teachers. We will distribute birthday party invitations only if the entire class is invited.

## **Clothing**

Please provide proper outerwear because we will go outside to play. All coats, jackets, and sweaters should be marked with your child’s name. When choosing your child’s clothing, please plan accordingly. The children will paint, glue, use markers, etc. Additionally, they enjoy climbing and running on the playground, so please make sure they wear appropriate shoes. “Play clothes” are most suitable with closed toe shoes.

Please send an extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks, in a plastic zip lock bag labeled with his/her name to leave in your child’s cubby.

## **Personal Items/Toys from home**

Please do not allow your child to bring favorite toys, candy, gum, jewelry, money, makeup, etc., to preschool.

Comfort items, such as blankets, stuffed animals, or pacifiers, are acceptable for one's and two's.

## **Toilet Training**

St. John's Preschool recognizes that each child grows and learns at his/her own rate; therefore, it does not set an age requirement for toilet training. If a child is developmentally ready for a class and meets the age requirements but is not yet toilet trained, the child will not be held back in the younger age group. In some cases, older preschoolers may have difficulties with toilet training. Should this occur, the staff will work with the family and medical professionals when needed. Consistency between home and school is crucial for effective potty training.

## Typical Day

At St. John's Preschool, we believe that children learn best within the context of a small community group that follows a predictable daily routine. The following schedule is an example of a typical daily routine for our preschool children.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<b>8:30 am</b>	<b>Arrival</b> Children enter the classroom and are greeted by teachers, and begin to play with activities that are out for morning arrival. (puzzles, play dough, blocks, etc.)
<b>8:45 am</b>	<b>Circle</b> Children and teachers come together for group time: share news, sing songs, talk about the topic for the day,
<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Explore in Play</b> Creating, discovering, and experimenting in center areas; Theme activities; Music and movement;
<b>10:00 am</b>	<b>Snack</b> Children sit together for snack and conversation.
<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Outside</b> Children play together while actively supervised by teachers.
<b>11:30 am</b>	<b>Lunch</b> Children return to the classroom and prepare for lunch. Children and teachers sit together for lunch and conversation.
<b>12:15 pm</b>	<b>Close</b> Children and teachers come together for closing circle, review and goodbyes.
<b>12:20 pm</b>	<b>Pick up</b>



## **Immunizations**

Children must be up-to-date on their immunizations against childhood diseases. Each child must have a copy of his or her immunization record on file with the school.

## **Medications**

We will not administer medication to any child unless written instructions and permissions have been filled out by the parent and approved by the Preschool Director.

## **Illness**

If your child is showing any signs of illness, we ask that you do not send him/her to preschool. In addition, if your child is not well enough to go outdoors, please do not send him/her to school.

If a child becomes ill at preschool, we will notify parents to pick their child up.

Parents must notify the preschool immediately if children contract infectious or communicable diseases or head lice. Your communication with staff is critical to controlling the spread of childhood illnesses.

If your child has been exposed to Covid and is symptomatic, please get in touch with your pediatrician and then contact the preschool director.

If your child tests positive for Covid, he/she must stay home for 5 - 10 days. Please keep in touch with the preschool director during this time and before sending your child back to preschool.

## General Guidelines for Illness

Keep your child at home if he/she has:

- temperature of 100° or higher: Keep your child at home until the temperature has been normal for 24 hours without medication.
- cold/cough/flu with sneezing and excessive nose drainage: Parents should remember that a cold can rapidly become Bronchitis or Pneumonia. Children with Bronchitis or Pneumonia do not necessarily run a temperature, but when they do, it is sudden and exceedingly high. Having to wipe a nose or cover a cough more than 3 times in 15 minutes is excessive.
- Diarrhea; more frequent than usual or watery stools
- vomiting.
- rashes that a physician has not diagnosed.
- conjunctivitis: an eye infection commonly referred to as "pink eye." The eye is generally red with some burning, and there may be some yellow drainage. The child must be kept home for 24 hours once the treatment has begun. If, after 24 hours, there is excessive drainage, the child should continue to remain at home.
- strep throat: If the doctor diagnoses a strep throat infection and places your child on an antibiotic medication, the child should not be brought to the preschool until 24 hours after the first dose of an antibiotic.

## **Children must be kept at home until they are fever free and/or symptom-free for 24 hours without medication.**

Please do not give a feverish/sick child fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, etc.) and send him/her to school. This does not stop a child from becoming ill – it only masks the illness and contributes to spreading viruses.

By helping us observe good health standards, you will protect your child and the other preschool children Any child's medical concerns should be discussed with the Preschool Director.

## Discipline Policy

Teachers use positive techniques of guidance, including logical or natural consequences applied in problem situations, redirection, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems, and encouragement of appropriate behavior.

Our discipline methods include:

- Conscious Discipline, a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning throughout the day.
- Second Step an early learning program that teaches skills to help children manage their feelings, make friends, and solve problems.

Our program recognizes that biting/hitting may be typical for toddlers (through 36 months). We are always upset when children are bitten or hurt in our program, and we recognize how upsetting it is for parents. While we feel that biting in excess is inappropriate behavior, we know that they bite for a variety of reasons, most of which are not related to behavioral problems. Our program focuses on effective techniques that address the specific reason for the biting or inappropriate behaviors and teach new, more appropriate behaviors, rather than on punishment for biting and or hitting. Under normal circumstances, we will not implement a policy focused upon the termination of care for the child who is biting or has any disruptive behaviors. We believe that this kind of exclusion policy does not help a child learn different, more appropriate behaviors.

We will:

- Put all children's safety first and provide appropriate first aid as well as comfort and guidance to any child who is hurt.
- Keep accurate records and accident reports.
- Keep your child's identity confidential if he or she bites, is bitten, or hurt. This helps avoid labeling or confrontations that will slow the learning process to control the behavior. The director may use her discretion and choose to share confidentiality with a parent.
- Provide appropriate planning for toddlers to help prevent hitting, biting, or inappropriate behavior.
- Help children in our program who are biting or hitting learn to control the urge to bite or hit and learn new appropriate behaviors.  
Have current information and resources for families.
- Provide teachers with adequate knowledge and training to deal appropriately and effectively with inappropriate behaviors.

- Take families' concerns seriously and treat them with understanding and respect. Communicate regularly.
- Provide information on what specific steps are being taken to address the behavior and explain the reasoning behind those steps while protecting confidentiality.
- Respond quickly to any questions, concerns, and suggestions.

Steps we may follow as a means of countering biting, hitting, or any inappropriate behavior will include:

- Environmental assessment of the classroom followed up with a conference with teachers to suggest changes that may encourage acceptable behaviors.
- Close observation and documentation by the teachers (and director) of the classroom activities, particularly transition times, to determine the frequency of and probable causes of behavior.
- Documentation (a running record) to be discussed with the classroom staff to determine any patterns in behavior and develop a written plan of strategies all staff will implement and follow.
- Conference with the child's parents to discuss these strategies and offer ideas on how parents can help at home.
- Conference with the parents of the child being bitten or hit to discuss strategies being utilized to alleviate the behavior.
- Shadowing the child to quickly and effectively address the behavior.
- When a situation warrants observation and intervention by a child behavioral specialist.
- Conference with a behavioral specialist, parents, teachers, and director to confirm strategies, and assessments, note any improvements, and follow up.

We wish we could guarantee that biting, hitting, or any inappropriate behavior will never happen in our program, but we know there are no guarantees. We will support your child whether he/she has the inappropriate behavior or whether he/she is the child that has been affected. We want the very best for the children in our program. Staff and parent communication, mutual respect, and support are key to the family/school relationship.

St. John's Preschool wants its students to develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. We believe this happens when adults and others, model and communicate with them in a positive, non-threatening, and understanding manner.

Each case is unique. All situations will be reviewed individually.

## **Emergency Response and Safety Protocols**

We have developed general operating guidelines and procedures for critical events and emergencies. *St. John's Preschool Emergency Response Handbook* is available in the Preschool Office for review and comment.

The doors to St. John's Church and Preschool remain locked during normal hours. If you are dropping off or picking up during times outside of our regular times, please use the door with the drive-through portico to call the church office for entry to the building.

### **Emergency Communications**

If inclement weather or an emergency occurs during preschool hours:

- Tune to local news media for emergency instructions.
- St. John's Preschool follows the New Hanover County School Board's decisions on school closings.

In times of emergency, information about the status of schools is communicated through a variety of media. Circumstances may prevent parents from picking up their children or may require that children be picked up at a location other than the preschool facility.

The safety of children and staff is our first priority. Our second priority is the reunification of parents with their children.

**Students will only be released to parents or additional authorized pick-ups on file in the ProCare app. Please keep your child's information up to date.**