

St. James'  
Nursery  
School

PARENT HANDBOOK

**Play, Learn,  
Grow Together!**



# Welcome to St. James' Nursery School

Dear Families,

On behalf of the staff at St. James' Nursery School, I would like to welcome you to our family. We are honored that you have chosen us to care for your child during these important early years.

As the Executive Director of St. James' Nursery School, I believe that each child deserves a nurturing environment where they can grow, learn, and thrive. Our dedicated team is committed to providing exceptional care that supports your child's unique development in a FUN and safe setting.

This handbook outlines our policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [gedwards@stjamesnurseryschool.com](mailto:gedwards@stjamesnurseryschool.com) or (301) 829-0014.

Sincerely,

Ginny Edwards  
Executive Director  
St. James' Nursery School

## About Our School

St. James Nursery School was established in 1974 .We are a licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care as a nursery school for two-, three-, four-, and five-year-olds. We are located at 1307 N. Main Street, Mt. Airy, Maryland.

St. James' has a deep Christian identity that is foundational to our educational program and is part of what makes our school special. Children participate in Chapel Time monthly with our Rector. St. James' is also a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools. This national organization offers resources for spiritual development, leadership mentoring, grants, and so much more.

### Our Mission

To provide an educational environment that nurtures each child's spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and social development.

### Our Vision

To be the best preschool program in the region dedicated to the preparation of children for success in school and life.

### Core Values

- To affirm the value and worth of every child.
- To enable each child to discover their personal interests, talents, and skills.
- To support an exceptional staff committed to providing caring, sensitive guidance with fair and consistent rules.
- To present a comprehensive curriculum that is creative and innovative.
- To create an environment that promotes social growth and behavior.
- To remain rooted in Christianity and be welcoming to children of all faiths.
- To provide support for families.
- To strengthen the mission of St. James' Episcopal Church.

## Statement of Respect

St. James' Nursery School is deeply committed to equity, honesty, kindness, and respect as part of the educational experience. To this end, we:

- strive to celebrate diversity both within our community and in our curriculum;
- are concerned for the well-being of all people;
- seek to build the self-esteem of all people;
- aspire to promote understanding among all people.

Recognizing the dignity and worth of all individuals and to protect their rights, we oppose bias, prejudice, and discrimination. St. James' Nursery School does not condone any behavior which is inconsistent with these tenets. We believe that spoken or written language or any behavior that is inconsistent with this philosophy and/or that demeans one's ethnic, religious, racial, physical, personal, and/or sexual characteristics is unacceptable. We expect individuals to take responsibility for their words and deeds and to respect all people.

## Non-Discrimination Statement

St. James' Nursery School does not discriminate based on sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability in determining which children are served.

It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

- Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, and
- Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:
  - Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student based on race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
  - Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;or

- Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.

## Contact Information

- **School Phone:** (301) 829-0014
- **Email:** [school@stjamesmtairy.org](mailto:school@stjamesmtairy.org)
- **Website:** [www.stjamesnurseryschool.com](http://www.stjamesnurseryschool.com)
- **Tax ID Number:** 52-1287482

## Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

## School Leadership

- **Executive Director:** Ginny Edwards, [gedwards@stjamesnurseryschool.com](mailto:gedwards@stjamesnurseryschool.com)
- **Rector:** The Rev. Angela Furlong, [rector@stjamesmtairy.org](mailto:rector@stjamesmtairy.org)

## St. James' Nursery School Board

The mission of the St. James' Nursery School Board is to provide oversight and to guide the future of the school so that it not only thrives but meets the needs of a growing and changing community. The Board is the policy-making body of the school and is composed of parents of children in the nursery school as well as church members and staff.

The Board seeks monthly financial and policy approval from the Vestry of St. James' Episcopal Church. The Nursery School Executive Director reports to the Rector of St. James' Episcopal Church.

## Licensing Agent

The Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care is responsible for all childcare licensing and regulation in the state.. The primary mission of the MSDE Office of Child Care is to foster the development of safe, available child care, nursery and preschool facilities for Maryland families. [A Parent's Guide to Regulated Child Care](#), provides information that is helpful when selecting a licensed program. The pamphlet also informs you about your rights and responsibilities as a child care consumer.

Regulated child care means that child care providers and their facilities have been checked by the state licensing authority and were found to meet minimum health, safety, and program standards. St. James' Nursery School is a licensed facility.

## Maryland State Program Accreditation

St. James Nursery School holds the Maryland State Program Accreditation. Maryland State Program Accreditation is a process by which early care and educational programs can significantly improve the quality of the services they provide. In this process, a program voluntarily pursues self-study, program improvement, and external program review in order to achieve and publicly confirm that it meets national or state quality standards.

The accreditation process presents a clear, consistent strategy to improve the quality of early childhood education services. This strategy is “clear” because all participating programs implement a set process for program improvement, and it is “consistent” because programs operate with the same set of national or state standards.

## Maryland EXCELS

Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a program that awards ratings to family providers, school-based and public-school child-care programs, and school age before and after school programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality in key areas. Maryland EXCELS has three goals:

- To recognize early care and school age education programs that provide quality care.
- To encourage providers to increase the level of quality provided in their programs.
- To provide parents with information and choices about quality child care.

Maryland EXCELS has standards in five broad program areas including licensing, learning environments, staffing and professional development, developmentally appropriate learning and program practices, child assessment, program administration and policies, and accreditation.

**St. James' Nursery School is proud to hold a 5-Star Quality rating.**

# Section 2: Philosophy and Curriculum

## Educational Philosophy

We believe that the early years in a child's life are hugely significant in the development of a child. Through careful and thoughtful planning of the learning environment and hands-on experiences, children are involved in activities that stimulate their interest and motivate their academic growth. We support and encourage our staff to continue to develop their skills and knowledge in early childhood education. We encourage parents to actively partner with us as your child attends our program. We provide opportunities for children to interact with a wide range of materials and with each other through play. Social skills, such as getting along with others and working in a group are important areas of focus in our program. One of our main goals is for children to be well-prepared for kindergarten and for later life experiences and to enjoy their first school experience!

## Curriculum Approach

Instructional Methods for an early childhood program take into consideration the interactions of the teacher with the child, the child with other children, and the child with materials. Instructional methods include not only direct instructional methods through individual, small-group, and whole group teacher-led experiences, but also social interactions, purposeful, planned play, and art experiences. St. James' Nursery School utilizes the Creative Curriculum and employs qualified and experienced teachers well-practiced in engaging our young learners.

The learner outcomes/objectives for our Preschool 3s and Pre-K4s classes are aligned with the State's prekindergarten and kindergarten curricular frameworks, also known as the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. For Preschool 2s, our outcomes align with Healthy Beginnings: Supporting Development and Learning from Birth through Three Years of Age.

Play is the primary vehicle of learning for a young child. Play allows the child to experiment, explore, and manipulate their environment, while developing imagination and creativity. Engaging in symbolic play allows a young child to express their thoughts and ideas, practice and rehearse new roles, and test out newly acquired knowledge and skills. Young children construct knowledge based on their real-life experience; they learn by doing. Children increase their knowledge of the world through repeated interactions with people and materials. Our classrooms are designed to encourage children's active exploration with adults, other children, and materials. A typical daily classroom routine includes a mix of direct instruction and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Children will work individually, in small groups, and as part of a large group.

## Learning Centers

Our classrooms are arranged into the following rotating learning centers to promote exploration and skill development:

- Circle Area
- Listening Center
- Dramatic Play/Housekeeping Center
- Block Center
- Sensory Table
- Science Center
- Math Center
- Literacy Center
- Problem Solving Center
- Writing Center
- Creative Art Center
- Library/Reading Corner

## Daily Schedule

Our daily activities are diverse, deliberate, and engaging. Individual classroom schedules are posted on each classroom's parent bulletin board. All programs include a variety of activities to allow for a mix of active and quiet, group and individual, fine and gross motor exploration. All daily schedules include circle time, centers, small group/one-on-one, outdoor play, enrichment, and snack.

## Assessment and Documentation

St. James' Nursery School staff monitor children's progress regularly by gathering data through observation, work sampling, digital photography, and direct interaction and questioning of children. Occasionally, a preschool screening may be suggested through a nearby school district for children who may have developmental delays or other concerns. Assessments help the teaching staff to identify children's interests and needs, while also allowing them to modify the curriculum and adapt their teaching practices. A detailed Developmental Checklist will be discussed at parent-teacher conferences in January. Assessment reports will be completed during the second term and sent home to parents in May before the school year ends.

## Technology Use

We take a balanced approach to technology:

- Screen time is limited and is always interactive and educational. Smart boards and tablets are accessible in some programs.
- Technology is used as a tool for learning, not as a substitute for hands-on experiences.
- Staff model appropriate use of technology.

St. James Preschool Teachers use Smartboards to enhance lessons and give children hands-on, large-motorskills practice that enhances the understanding and internalization of skills.

## Classroom Ratio

Our classes are limited in size to allow children as much individualized attention as possible. We follow the guidelines for student to teacher ratio as set by MSDE standards.

## Field Trips

Field Trips to interesting and educational places in the area are an integral part of our curriculum. Parents will be notified of field trips in advance and a completed, signed permission slip must be on file with our office in order for a child to attend any field trip. Transportation for most of our field trips is provided by parents. While we are a very family-oriented school, there will be some field trips offered that siblings will be invited to join and others where siblings will be asked not to attend. Throughout the year, we also plan various visits to our school by community organizations such as the local fire department and the public library.

## Chapel Time

The purpose of Chapel Time is to enhance the spiritual development of our little ones through developmentally appropriate songs, short prayers, lessons and stories. Once a month each class will meet with the Rector of St. James' Episcopal Church for a brief (10-15 minute) Chapel Time. Parents are always more than welcome to attend.

## **Community Service**

Through planned activities, each child learns the values and pleasures of giving to others. Projects and activities are designed to include the children in an age-appropriate way and may include outreach within or outside of the immediate school community.

## **Toys from Home**

The older preschool classroom may schedule an occasional day of “show and tell” when children are encouraged to bring one item from home to talk about and share with friends. In general, we discourage children from bringing in cars, trucks, dolls, and other small items that can easily be lost or broken. It is hard for young children to share things from home. Having to share may create unnecessary problems for your child and their friends. Teachers may gently require your child to keep objects from home stored in their cubby. If toys or other items are brought from home, St. James’ is not responsible for any loss or breakage that may happen to those items.

We do allow transitional objects that help comfort children at nap time, such as a small stuffed animal. Children should never bring candy, chewing gum, electronics, valuables, or money to the Center. Be sure to label personal items with your child’s name.

# Section 3: Enrollment and Admission Policies

## Eligibility Requirements

- All children must complete the registration process, including all MSDE required forms (see below).
- All children must be toilet trained in the Preschool Older 3s and Pre-K 4s programs. Children in the Preschool 2s and younger Preschool 3s programs do not need to be potty-trained. Diapers and wipes are provided by the parent/guardian.

## Admission Process

### Initial Inquiry and Tour

Families interested in enrolling their child should contact the school to schedule a tour.

### Waitlist Policy

Registrations are accepted year-round if space is available. Yearly registration for the upcoming school year opens in January. Currently enrolled students, their siblings, St. James' Episcopal Church members and alumni of St. James' Nursery School will be given preference for next year's classes.

### Enrollment Requirements

To secure enrollment, MSDE requires the following:

- Emergency Information Form
- Student Allergy and Anaphylaxis Information Sheet
- Health Inventory
- Immunization Certificate
- Blood Lead Testing Certificate
- If your child has an allergy you will need to complete the Allergy and Anaphylaxis Medication Administration and Authorization Plan. A doctor's signature is required.
- If your child has asthma you will need to complete the Asthma Action Plan and Medication Administration Authorization Form. A doctor's signature is required.
- If your child requires any other medication you will need to complete the Medication Administration Form.

The above forms are due by July 15 for the coming school year. If enrolling mid-year, forms must be completed before your child can attend class.

### **Registration Fee and Tuition**

The non-refundable registration fee for the first child is \$75.00. Each additional child is \$25.00. The Registration Fee is due at the time of application.

Monthly tuition is billed on the 15th of each month and is due by the 31st (for the upcoming month). If tuition has not been paid by the 10th of that month, a \$35 late fee is applied.

St. James uses ProCare as our business and communication software. Families may opt to pay tuition through the ProCare app.

Parents will also be provided a PIN through the ProCare App to electronically sign their children in/out of their classrooms.

# Section 4: Tuition and Fees 2026-2027

## St. James Nursery School Programs and Rates 2026-2027

### Preschool Two's (Blue Room)

(All classes are 2½ hours long)

Two, three or 5 days per week

MTWTHF, 9-11:30 – 694.50/month

MWF AM, 9:00-11:30 - \$417.15/month

TTH AM, 9:00-11:30 - \$290.46/month

### Preschool Three/Fours (Yellow and Red Rooms)

TTH- 9:00-3:00 – 481.01/month

MWF – 9:00-3:00 – 640.99/month

MTWTHF – 9:00-3:00 – 1122.00/month

TTH 9:00-12:00 – 263.68/month

MWF 9:00-12:00 – 314.15/month

MTWTHF 9:00-12:00 – 566.72/month

### Pre-Kindergarten 4's (Green Rooms)

TTH 9:00-3:00 – 425.39/month

MWF 9:00 – 3:00 – 597.40/month

MTWTHF 9:00 – 3:00 - 993.00/month

### Extended Care for those enrolled in any program above (ages 2-5)

#### 7-9 am and 3-5 pm

TTH 199.73/month

MWF 285.33/month

MTWTHF 485.00/month

## **Tuition Payment Plan**

Tuition can be paid in full, in two equal payments, or monthly in nine equal payments. St. James' operates on a school year schedule, beginning the day after Labor Day and ending at the end of May. Tuition is based on the number of school days care is provided during the entire school year. Please note that our calendar includes school closures for holidays and monthly in-service days for teachers.

Tuition is due regardless of holidays, vacations, absences (for any reason and for any length of time), illnesses, inclement weather events, and national/state emergencies.

## **Payment Methods**

We accept cash, check, money order, or payments may be made through our online portal. Credit card payments will include a bank processing fee. Cash, checks, and money orders may be dropped off in the secure lockbox located outside the School Director's office or mailed to St. James' Nursery School, 1307 N. Main St., Mt. Airy, MD 21771.

Please make your checks/money orders payable to "St. James' Nursery School" and include your child's name on the memo line.

## **Late Payment Fee**

A statement will be sent for any account more than 10 days overdue, and a \$35.00 late fee will be assessed. If a past due amount remains after 30 days, the child may not attend class unless special arrangements have been made with the Executive Director.

## **Returned Check Fee**

Payments returned by the bank for insufficient funds, stop payments, etc. will be charged the current bank fee. Subsequent returned checks will be charged a \$25.00 processing fee in addition to the bank fee. All future payments must then be paid by money order, certified check, or through the online portal.

## **Miscellaneous Fees**

During the school year, there may be additional fees for field trips and special projects. Please contact the Executive Director if financial assistance is needed to assist with these fees.

## **Tuition Assistance**

Tuition assistance is available on a limited basis. Confidentiality is always maintained. If a need arises in your family during the school year and/or you have questions, call the school office to speak with the Executive Director.

## **Rate Increase**

Tuition rates are subject to increase once per year. Tuition rates are determined in January prior to open registration and apply to the next school year.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

During the school year, the office must be notified in writing at least 30 days in advance of the intent to withdraw. Tuition must be paid for this period whether or not the child is in attendance. After 30 days, you will receive a refund of any credit balance that remains outside that amount.

## **Miscellaneous Fees**

During the school year, there may be additional fees for field trips or special projects and fundraisers. Please contact the Executive Director if financial assistance is needed.

# Section 5: Hours of Operation and Closures

## Regular Hours of Operation

St. James' Nursery School is open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday. In addition to the closures listed below, please refer to the 2025-2026 Parent Calendar for other closures and special events.

## Holiday Closures

Our school is closed on the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Holiday
- Christmas Holiday
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- Presidents' Day Holiday
- Easter Break
- Memorial Day

## Professional Development Closures

Staff Professional Development Days are offered at St. James' Nursery School for the purposes of training and collaborative activities. These days are designed to enhance educators' skills and knowledge and to improve teaching practices and student learning opportunities. These dates are included on the Parent Calendar and are taken into consideration in the total number of days offered to students.

# Weather-Related and Emergency Closures

## Weather Closures

- When [Carroll County Schools](#) are closed due to inclement weather, St. James' Nursery School will also be closed.
- When Carroll County Schools have a **one** hour delayed opening:
  - St. James will open at 10:00 am for all programs.
- When Carroll County Schools have a **two** hour delayed opening:
  - St. James will be closed for ½ day programs
  - St. James will open at 11am for full day programs
- If Carroll County Schools dismiss early, we will dismiss at noon for all programs.
- St. James' Nursery School builds into its schedule several extra days for each class to account for snow day or emergency closings. When we exceed these days, we will make up additional days within the school year whenever possible, as follows:
  - If more than four days are missed for the three-day-a-week classes
  - If more than three days are missed for the two-day-a-week classes
  - Beyond that, classes will be made up after Memorial Day, as necessary, up to June 10.
- As always, your child's safety comes first. If you are uncomfortable with the driving conditions, we will respect your decision to keep your child at home or pick them up early.
- There will also be a message sent SMS to parents via the ProCare App.

In the event of an emergency such as a power outage, water main break, or building damage that prevents safe operation, we may need to close with limited notice. We will contact families by Class Dojo, our Facebook page, text message and/or phone as soon as a closure decision is made. Families will be responsible for arranging pickup of their children as soon as possible, and within 1 hour of notification.

# Drop-off and Pick-up Times

## Morning Drop-off

- Children may be dropped off between 8:55-9:05 am
- After 9:15, please notify the school if your child will be arriving late.

## Afternoon Pick-up

- Children must be picked up by **[Insert Closing Time -- e.g., 6:00 PM]**.
- A late fee of **[Insert Late Fee -- e.g., \$1 per minute]** will be charged for pick-ups after closing time.

## Calendar

A complete annual calendar listing all closures and special events will be provided to families upon enrollment and at the beginning of each calendar year. The calendar is also available on our website and parent communication app.

# Section 6: Arrival, Departure, and Security

## Parking and Traffic Flow

For the safety of all children, please drive slowly and with great care in our parking lot. There are marked and designated spots for parking. [Please do not park along the sidewalk.] Cars must be turned off when unoccupied. **Never leave any child unattended in your vehicle.**

Parents are asked to hold their children's hands while walking through the parking lot.

## Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures

### Daily Sign-In

All children must be signed-in by an adult (18 years or older). St James uses a digital sign-in/out system located outside each classroom. Parents/guardians must:

- Use their unique PIN to access the system.
- Select their child's name.
- Confirm check-in with signature.
- Escort their child into their classroom and make direct contact with their child's teacher.

### Daily Sign-Out

Pickup is expected promptly at the end of the scheduled class time. Children must be signed out by an authorized adult using the same digital system before leaving the school. After signing out:

- Collect your child's belongings.
- Check your child's cubby for any communications.
- Make direct contact with your child's teacher to inform them you are taking your child.

## Late Pick-Up Procedures

If you are late picking up your child:

- Call the school as soon as possible to let us know.
- Arrange for an authorized person to pick up your child, if possible.

If we have not heard from you 30 minutes after our pick-up time, and we are unable to reach any emergency contacts in your child's file, we are legally required to contact local authorities.

## Transition Times

Drop-off and pick-up can be emotional times for children (and parents). Here are some practices that might help facilitate a smooth transition:

- Establish a consistent goodbye routine with your child.
- Keep goodbyes brief but nurturing.
- Inform your child's teacher if there are any special circumstances that might affect your child's day.

## Authorized Pick-Up Persons

### Authorized Individuals

Children will only be released to individuals listed on the Emergency Form. All authorized individuals must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Present a valid photo ID until they are known to staff.
- Use their unique PIN to access the system.
- Be listed in our system as an authorized pick-up person.

### Adding or Removing Authorized Individuals

To add or remove someone from your authorized pick-up list:

- Submit changes to the Executive Director in writing (email is acceptable).
- Changes must be made by a legal guardian.
- Changes cannot be made over the phone.

### Emergency Pick-Up Authorization

In an emergency, when an unauthorized person must pick up your child:

- Call the school and speak with the Executive Director.

- Provide the name, phone number, and description of the person who will be picking up your child.
- Have the pick-up person present a valid photo ID upon arrival.

## **Custody Arrangements**

If parents share custody or have custody arrangements, please note:

- Parents must provide the school with a copy of the current court order or custody agreement.
- We can only enforce legal custody documentation that is on file.
- Without legal documentation, we cannot prevent a parent from picking up their child.
- The school will follow the most recent court order on file at the school.

## **Security Procedures**

### **Building Access**

The main entrance of the school is open at drop-off and pick-up times. At all other times, anyone wanting access to the building will need to ring the doorbell. They will be asked to identify themselves. All other outside doors to the building are kept locked. Additionally, all classroom doors are locked during the school day.

### **ID Verification**

Staff will request photo identification from any person they do not recognize, even if the person is on the authorized pick-up list. This policy is strictly enforced for the safety of the children.

## **Emergency Evacuation Pick-Up**

There are plans in place for the evacuation of our school, should it ever be necessary. The evacuation location is the Mt. Airy Baptist Church across the road on Main Street. Families will be notified through text, email, and/or phone call. Photo ID will be required for pick-up at the emergency location. Drills are practiced monthly and staff review plans annually. Each classroom has a Ready-to-Go Kit that contains copies of children's emergency cards.

# Section 7: Health and Safety Policies

## Dressing for School

Please dress your child in clothing they can manage themselves. It is suggested that children wear play clothes to school. Children will be involved in messy art, and clothes may get stained with paint. Additionally, please check the weather each morning and have them dress accordingly. In accordance with msde GUIDELINES, we will go outside to play every day unless it is raining or extremely cold. For children's safety, they must wear shoes appropriate for playground use (no flip-flops, sandals, jellies, or crocs). **Please mark all coats, sweaters, hats, and boots with your child's name.**

## Illness Policy

### When to Keep Your Child Home

Children must remain home when they have any of the following symptoms or illnesses within 24 hours before school:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Vomiting (two or more episodes in 24 hours)
- Diarrhea (three or more loose stools in 24 hours)
- Eye discharge or pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- Undiagnosed rash or open sores
- Severe cough or difficulty breathing
- Head lice or scabies (until treated)
- Strep throat (until 24 hours after antibiotics have begun)
- Any contagious illness such as flu, measles, chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, etc.
- Lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, or other signs of possible severe illness

### Return to school After Illness

Children may return to the school when:

- They have been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- They have been free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have completed at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment for a bacterial infection.
- A physician's note states they are no longer contagious (required for certain illnesses).

- They can participate comfortably in all routine activities including outdoor play.

## Illness at the school

If your child develops symptoms of illness while at school:

- You will be contacted immediately and asked to pick up your child within one hour.
- Your child will be monitored and kept comfortable in a quiet area away from other children.
- If you cannot be reached, we will call the emergency contacts listed on your child's enrollment form.
- If symptoms worsen before you arrive, we may contact emergency medical services, if necessary.

## Notification of Communicable Disease

Parents must notify the school within 24 hours if their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease. The school will notify all families (maintaining confidentiality) when children have been exposed to a communicable disease. For certain reportable diseases, we are required to notify the local health department.

## Handwashing

Proper handwashing is required for all staff and children:

- Upon arrival at the school
- Before and after handling food
- Before and after eating
- After diapering or using the toilet
- After playing outdoors
- After handling pets or animals
- After wiping noses or assisting with other bodily fluids
- After cleaning or handling garbage

## **Cleaning and Sanitizing**

Our school follows a comprehensive cleaning and sanitizing schedule that includes:

- Daily cleaning and sanitizing of all surfaces, toys, and equipment
- Weekly deep cleaning of shelves, dramatic play items, and furniture
- Use of EPA-approved disinfectants
- Regular professional cleaning services
- Enhanced cleaning protocols during illness outbreaks

## **Medication Administration**

### **Prescription Medication**

We will administer prescription medication only when:

- A completed Medication Administration Authorization Form is on file
- Medication is in its original container with the pharmacy label
- Label includes the child's name, medication name, dosage, and prescribing physician
- Medication has not expired
- A measuring device is provided for liquid medications

### **Medication Storage**

All medications are stored in a location which is inaccessible to children. Emergency medications such as EpiPens or inhalers are stored in an unlocked cabinet that is inaccessible to children but quickly accessible to staff.

### **Sunscreen**

We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child each day before drop-off.

# Allergies and Special Health Needs

## Allergy Management

St. James' Nursery School endeavors to provide a safe environment for all children. Each child must have a completed Student Allergy and/or Asthma Information Sheet on file that is signed and updated by the parent(s) annually. Dietary Restrictions should also be listed on this form.

For children with allergies:

- An Allergy and Anaphylaxis Medication Administration and Authorization Plan must be completed by the parent and physician. This form must be completed annually.
- The plan must detail the specific allergens, recognition of symptoms, and treatment
- If medication is required (such as an EpiPen), it must be provided according to our medication policy
- Staff are trained in allergy recognition and emergency response
- Allergy information is posted in the classroom and in food preparation areas

## Nut-Free Facility

To ensure the safety of children with dangerous nut allergies, we make every effort to ensure our classroom environments are free of nut products. We do not use nut ingredients in cooking or in snacks. We ask parents to avoid nut products and products containing nuts when bringing in special birthday, holiday and picnic treats.

## Asthma Management

For children with asthma:

- An Asthma Action Plan and Medication Administration and Authorization Form must be completed by the parent and physician. **This form must be completed annually.**
- The plan must detail the specific allergens, recognition of symptoms, and treatment.
- If medication is required, it must be provided according to our medication administration policy.
- Staff are trained in asthma event recognition and emergency response.

## Special Health Care Needs

Children with special health needs require:

- A Special Care Plan completed by a healthcare provider.
- Staff training specific to the child's condition.
- Regular updates as the child's condition or needs change.
- Medication or specialized equipment, as needed.
- Regular communication between parents, healthcare providers, and school staff.

## Medical Emergencies

In accordance with MSDE Office of Child Care licensing regulations, all staff members must complete Basic First Aid training and Pediatric Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

In case of a medical emergency:

- First aid will be administered by trained staff.
- Emergency medical services (911) will be called, if necessary.
- Parents will be contacted immediately.
- If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called.
- A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital with the child's medical forms if parents/emergency contacts have not arrived.
- An incident report will be completed and provided to parents.

## Injury Procedures

### Minor Injuries

For minor injuries (small cuts, scrapes, bruises):

- First aid will be administered by trained staff.
- An incident report will be completed and parent(s) notified at pick-up.
- Staff will monitor the child for any changes in condition.

## Serious Injuries

For more serious injuries (large cuts, possible sprains, bumps to the head):

- First aid will be administered by trained staff.
- Parents will be contacted immediately.
- An incident report will be completed.
- Depending upon severity, the school may recommend professional medical attention.

## Emergency Preparedness

### Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted monthly. Staff and children practice evacuating the building quickly and safely, following posted evacuation routes. We maintain a record of all drills.

### Shelter-in-Place

Shelter-in-place drills are conducted for scenarios such as severe weather or environmental hazards. Children and staff practice moving to designated safe areas within the building.

### Lockdown Procedures

Lockdown drills are periodically conducted to prepare for potential security threats. During these drills, children and staff practice moving to secure areas away from doors and windows and remaining quiet until the all-clear is given.

## Mandatory Reporting

All staff members are mandated reporters and are legally required to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. The school will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

## Teachers

To keep children in our programs safe, we take the following steps in our intensive screening of employees and volunteers:

- Comprehensive interview process
- Reference checks
- Criminal background record checks (State and Federal)
- On-going training in child development, curriculum, and classroom management

## Babysitting

Employees are often asked to provide babysitting and other services on their own time to families. St. James' Nursery School does NOT permit employees to provide babysitting or other services to families or children enrolled at our school. In addition, teachers should not provide transportation in a personal vehicle or be in contact with your child outside of school programs.

Families are discouraged from contacting teachers outside of the preschool including non-school email, social media, texting, letters, etc. Such policies are designed to protect children and teachers from child abuse and/or false allegations.

## Family Code of Conduct

Maintaining a warm, nurturing environment for children, parents and teachers is a mutual effort. We expect both teachers and parents to keep honest and respectful lines of communication open. Just as there are expectations concerning appropriate teacher conduct, there are also expectations for appropriate parent conduct:

The following behaviors are not acceptable:

- Cursing or swearing when speaking with teachers, children, or other parents.
- Using violence or acting in any way that causes teachers, children, or other parents to feel threatened.
- Arguing with parents or teachers.
- Interfering with a teacher's ability to do their job.
- Violating our Confidentiality Policy.
- Physical or verbal punishment of your child(ren) or other children while in the program.

We have the right to exclude any parent(s)/guardian(s) in violation of this policy from participating in the program or entering the program. Inappropriate behavior or failure to meet expectations as explained herein may result in immediate termination of care.

## **Smoke-Free Facility**

St. James' Nursery School is a smoke-free facility. Smoking is not permitted in the building or on the grounds of St. James' Nursery School and Church. This policy also applies to all St. James' functions including field trips and picnics.

## **Pets**

For safety reasons, pets are not permitted on school property or at school functions unless authorized in advance by the Executive Director.

## **Permission to Photograph, Videotape or Audiotape**

Throughout the school year St. James' Nursery School may use your child's photograph, video image, or voice for educational and informational purposes without identification by name. If you do not wish to have your child appear in a videotape or photograph or have their voice reproduced on tape, please notify the Executive Director in writing. It is assumed that parents and guardians consent to their children being photographed, videotaped, or audio taped unless written notification is received. If you do not wish to have your child's name or likeness published by the media and/or on our website, Facebook page, Instagram, or Class Dojo, you should address your concerns directly to the Executive Director.

# Section 8: Nutrition and Meals

## Meal Program

### Snacks

We provide healthy snacks and drinks during the school day which adhere to the nutritional guidelines stated below.

**Snacks:** Students are offered a daily snack, per MSDE guidelines. The monthly snack menu is posted in the lobby on the Parent Information board. Parents are welcome to make arrangements with their child's teacher to bring a nutritious snack (fruit, cheese, yogurt, etc.) for the whole class. Most birthday celebrations occur during snack time in the child's classroom, and parents often provide mini-cupcakes or a snack requested by the child celebrating a birthday. Perhaps you can consider your child's school celebration an official birthday party – they have friends there and the classroom is set up specifically to accommodate young children! You are welcome to make arrangements with your child's teacher to bring party napkins and plates and read a story to the class to extend the celebration. Candy and junk food are not appropriate, and ALL snacks brought from home **must** be nut free.

### Full Day Program Lunch

We ask families to provide a well-balanced, nut-free lunch for their child each day. Lunches will be refrigerated as needed. Per licensing regulations, the school provides milk with lunch everyday; therefore, parents do not need to provide a drink with their child's lunch. Please label your child's lunch box on the outside.

## Nutritional Guidelines

Our menus are developed to meet or exceed the nutritional requirements of the MSDE Office of Child Care. We emphasize:

- Whole grains
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Lean proteins
- Limited added sugars and processed foods
- Age-appropriate portions
- Varied flavors and textures to expand children's palates

# Special Diets and Food Allergies

## Religious or Cultural Food Preferences

We respect families' religious and cultural food preferences. Please discuss specific dietary needs with the Executive Director upon enrollment. We will make reasonable accommodations whenever possible.

## Severe or Multiple Allergies

For children with severe or multiple allergies that cannot be reasonably accommodated within our food program, parents may be asked to provide some or all meals and snacks. These must:

- Be nutritionally balanced
- Meet our nut-free policy
- Be properly labeled with the child's name and date
- Not require extensive preparation

## Mealtime Environment

During snack and lunch time, our teachers:

- Model healthy eating habits
- Encourage trying new foods
- Facilitate conversation
- Support the development of self-help skills
- Create a pleasant social atmosphere
- Encourage, but never force, children to try new foods.

# Section 9: Behavior Guidance and Discipline

## Guidance Philosophy

At St. James' Nursery School, we believe that behavior guidance should be positive, respectful, and focused on teaching children the skills they need to regulate their emotions and interact successfully with others. Our approach is based on the understanding that young children are still developing self-control and social skills. We view challenging behaviors as learning opportunities and teaching moments rather than infractions requiring punishment.

Most children at our school readily adapt to the classroom environment. However, occasional unacceptable behavior will manifest itself in the classroom. This is natural and our teachers are able to handle most disruptions with minimal disturbance to the class.

## Discipline Policy

The discipline policy of St. James' Nursery School is based on the desire to help children become self-directed in their behavior. Through careful planning of the learning environment, interesting and exciting experiences, and a consistent schedule many behavior problems are naturally avoided. Children tend to work best when they are familiar with the classroom procedure and schedule. These methods are used to limit and/or eliminate the use of disciplinary measures.

Our teachers use the following positive guidance strategies:

- Modeling appropriate behavior and language
- Setting clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate expectations
- Giving specific, positive feedback for desirable behaviors
- Redirecting children to acceptable activities
- Offering choices within necessary limits
- Teaching problem-solving skills and conflict resolution
- Using natural and logical consequences

## **Prohibited Disciplinary Methods**

The following disciplinary methods are strictly prohibited at our school:

- Corporal punishment of any kind
- Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks
- Withholding or forcing food, rest, or bathroom use
- Punishment for toileting accidents
- Public or private humiliation
- Isolation without supervision
- Binding or restricting movement

## **Approach to Challenging Behaviors**

Behavior which endangers other students such as biting, spitting, hitting, pushing and kicking require an administrative response in addition to an immediate disciplinary response on the teacher's part. When these behaviors occur, teaching staff will begin documenting and will talk with the parent.

Parents of a child who continues to have behavior problems may be asked to pay the cost of an extra aide for their child's satisfactory adjustment to the program.

In the case of repeated disciplinary concerns, the staff will meet with the parents to discuss strategies that can be implemented at home and at school. In extreme circumstances, a child may be released from the program to protect other children and the classroom environment.

## **Communication with Families**

Open communication between staff and families is essential for addressing behavioral concerns:

- Minor behavior issues are communicated through daily reports or brief conversations.
- Significant or recurring behaviors will be discussed in private, not at drop-off or pick-up.
- Parents will be notified the same day about any serious behavioral incidents.
- Regular conferences provide opportunities to discuss behavioral progress.
- Staff will share both challenges and successes observed in the classroom.
- Families are encouraged to share relevant information that may affect their child's behavior.

# Section 10: Parent Involvement and Communication

## Communication Philosophy

Families and schools represent the two main environments in which young children grow and develop. Because the daily routines at home and the preschool program have a common interest in the child's well-being, and because they share the tasks of care and education, it is important to establish and maintain positive relationships through communication, cooperation, and collaboration. Children are the ones who benefit most from healthy, reciprocal relationships between teachers and families.

## Methods of Communication

### Daily Communications

St. James' Nursery School uses digital apps (ClassDojo and ProCare) to communicate with parents. Parents will receive an invitation to access the child's classroom. We ask that all parents use this free tool to view messages and photos as they are posted to the app. **Please be sure your notifications are turned on!**

### Formal Communications

The school communicates important information through:

- Classroom bulletin boards
- Newsletters (emailed and posted on parent board)
- The Parent Handbook (updated annually)
- ProCare SMS and email for important announcements
- School website with calendar and program information
- Social media accounts for school events and updates

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in January and May. Completed developmental checklists are sent home at these times. Parent-Teacher Getting-to-Know-You Conferences will be held in September for our Preschool 2s. Feel free to discuss any concerns or questions, or request a conference with your child's teacher anytime throughout the year.

## Family Involvement Opportunities

### Classroom Participation

Classroom volunteering enables parents to share and understand their child's preschool experience. Parents are able to assist teachers with activities and gain an appreciation of their child's day. Volunteering in the classroom can be an enriching experience for you, your child, and the entire class.

All volunteers will need to read the Volunteer Information Guide and return a signed slip indicating your understanding and acceptance of its contents prior to working in the classroom. Additionally, all volunteers in the classroom will need to complete a Release of Information Form and have it notarized.

The school office will also make requests for volunteers to help with the Spring Book Fair, End-of-Year Picnics, and other school events and fundraisers. Your help is greatly appreciated.

## Family Events

Throughout the year, we will offer opportunities for family members to come to school to participate in special activities with their children. We hope you will be able to join us!

## Parent Surveys and Feedback

Evaluations of our program will be conducted annually through the use of a parent survey. Your participation is very important as we strive to offer a successful and enriching preschool program for the community.

## **Expectations for Families**

To support effective communication and partnership, we ask families to:

- Read all communications from the school and classroom.
- Check the parent communication app/email daily.
- Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences.
- Update contact information promptly.
- Inform teachers of significant changes that might affect your child.
- Respond to requests for information or permission in a timely manner.
- Complete annual program surveys.