

## **INTRODUCTION TO OUR PROGRAM**

St. James' Nursery School was established in 1974. We are a licensed nursery for two, three, four, and five year olds. All teachers are college graduates and/or have course work in early childhood education. All classes are staffed with a teacher and full-time aide. St. James' Nursery School is a mission of St. James' Episcopal Church and encourages the wonder of God's creation and provides an environment that nurtures the child's spiritual and intellectual growth with acceptance and security.

### **Licensing Agent – Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)**

The MSDE Office of Child Care is responsible for all child care licensing and regulation in the state. This includes nursery and preschool programs. 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.

Regulated child care means that child care providers and their centers 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. This license is reviewed annually for renewal at both our Main Street and Gillis Falls locations.

### **Coming Soon! Accreditation – NAEYC**

St. James' Nursery School is currently going through the self-assessment portion of the accreditation process with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our goal is to be accredited by the end of the 2009-2010 school year. This accreditation, once achieved, will be valid for 5 years. The accreditation process involves a rigorous self-study, parent & teacher surveys, observations, and validation from a NAEYC assessor. Programs are also required to submit annual reports documenting that they maintain compliance with the program standards.

## **OUR PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

We believe that the early years in a child's life are truly 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 which stimulate and motivate their interest and academic growth. 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 a focus of our program. One of our main goals is for children to be well-prepared for kindergarten and for later life experiences – and most of all – to enjoy their first school experience!

## **PURPOSE FOR CHILDREN**

- To learn to take directions and relate to someone other than the primary caretaker.
- To find that school is a happy place and that teachers are warm and friendly.
- To help develop self-discipline through encouragement and consistent standards of behavior.
- To use gross and fine motor skills through active play with equipment designed for their age.
- To develop skills, talents, and interests and expand them.
- To develop a positive sense of personal self-esteem and an understanding of the needs and rights of others.
- To experience personal pride of achievement.
- To consider individual needs in conjunction with the purpose for the group.
- To expand the ability to communicate and interact with others.

## **ST. JAMES' NURSERY SCHOOL BOARD**

The Mission of the Nursery School Board is to provide oversight of the St. James' Nursery School 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.

## **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

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

## **PREREQUISITES**

- Children must turn the age for the class prior to September 1 of that school year. No exceptions will be made.
- All children must be toilet trained in the three, Pre-Kindergarten four and four/five year old classes. (pull-ups and diapers are not allowed). Children in the two-year-old classes do not need to be potty-trained. Three diapers and/or pull-ups, and a change of clothes, must be brought in for every class in the bottom of the child's tote-bag. Wipes will be provided by the school.
- All children must have all completed forms returned to the Nursery School office by July 15<sup>th</sup>. Parents of returning students must update forms prior to attending class. Those children enrolled after the beginning of the school year must have forms returned prior to classroom attendance.
- Please be assured that all child and family information is kept confidential. School offices are locked during non-operational hours and copies of emergency information kept in the classrooms are secure when school is not in session.
- A completed emergency card including correct contact information and additional pick-up people must be on file. Please update this information promptly if changes occur.

## **Tuition and Enrollment Policies**

### **Registration and Enrollment**

- Completed medical forms must be on file in the nursery office by July 15th for all September enrollees. For midyear enrollments, completed medical forms must be submitted to the office before the child may begin attending classes.
- Two-year-old classes will not exceed 10 children. Three-year-old classes will not exceed 15. Four and Five-year-old classes will not exceed 18
- St. James' Nursery School is open to all children regardless of race, ethnic background or church affiliation.
- Applications for available spaces will be accepted on an announced registration day in February for the following year. This year's currently enrolled children, their siblings, St. James' Episcopal Church members and alumni of St. James' Nursery School will be given preference for next year's classes.

## **Tuition and Fees**

- Payment of a non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 is required each year when a child is registered. If the child is placed on a waiting list, payment of the registration fee will not be required until the child is enrolled in a class. Children enrolling in more than one class will only be assessed one registration fee each year.
- Tuition is charged on an annual basis. This fee can be paid in full, divided into two equal payments or paid in nine equal payments. The first payment is due July 15. If paying monthly, subsequent payments are due on the first of each month starting with September.
- If paying in two equal payments, the first payment is due July 15, and the second payment is due November 15. Payment is due at least one month in advance, unless special arrangements have been made with the Business Manager.
- Tuition is to be paid in full regardless of a child's absences, holidays, and/or inclement weather closings.
- Families with more than one child enrolled will receive a discount on the registration fee of \$50.00 for each additional child enrolled.
- All payments must be paid by check, money order or cash. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Nursery School. Please enter the child's name in the memo section of your check. If paying with cash, please provide the exact amount.
- Tuition checks may be mailed to St. James Nursery School, PO Box 416 Mt. Airy, MD 21771 or paid in the St. James' Nursery School office located at the Main Street location. Teachers cannot accept tuition payments.
- If for any reason the child will not begin the school year at St. James' (this includes toilet training issues), the July 15 payment will be refunded if the school is notified prior to August 1.
- If tuition payment has not been received by July 15, the child will be dropped from the program.
- A late fee of \$25.00 will be charged if payment is not received by the 10th of the month in which payment is due.
- Any account with an unpaid balance after the 10th of the month will receive written notification of past due status. If a past due balance remains at the end of the month, the child may not attend class unless special arrangements have been made with the Business Manager.
- Families with past due balances will not be admitted to future programs until their prior financial obligations have been met.
- 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 cash. At this time, credit cards will not be accepted.
- A fee of \$5.00 is required for all student record copy and/or transfer requests.

- During the school year, there may be additional fees for field trips and special projects. Please contact the St. James' Nursery School Business Manager 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 If you have questions, call the school office to speak with the Business Manager.

### **Student Termination and Withdrawal**

- The Nursery School Board reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment due to unsatisfactory adjustment to the nursery program, incident(s) of parental misconduct, or a parent's refusal to follow nursery school policies and procedures as stated in this handbook.
- If no payment has been received from a parent by July 31st, the child will be dropped from the program.
- Notification of withdrawal for any reason, including toilet training, must be received in writing by July 31st. There will be no refund of September tuition if notification is later than July 31st.
- When tuition is past due for 30 days, parents will be requested not to bring their child to school, unless specific arrangements have been made with the Business Manager.
- The school 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.
- Refunds will only be made if the school receives written notice at least 30 days prior to withdrawal date.

## **OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Arrival and Departure Procedures**

- For the safety of all children please drive slowly and with great care in our parking lots.
- Parents and children must hold hands when walking to and from their car and the school.
- When dropping children off for school they must be escorted by an adult into the classroom. Prior to leaving, please be sure that a staff member is aware that your child has arrived.
- **Children should arrive to their class at their scheduled class time.** Arrival time is not to be earlier than 5 minutes before class time.
- If a different adult will be picking up your child, please make sure to notify the teacher or assistant teacher of the adult's name. Arrangements with the school must be made in advance in order for another person to pick-up your child.

- **Pickup is expected promptly at the end of the scheduled class time. If a parent is consistently late for pickup the teacher will first remind them of the pickup time. If this continues, the director will speak with the parent and if the problem is then not resolved the parent will receive a letter telling them that if they are late again their child will be withdrawn from the program.**

### **Behavior Policy**

- At St. James' Nursery School, each child is respected as an important and unique individual who has the right to learn in a supportive, risk-free environment. It is our goal to offer this environment for optimum achievement. Our goal is to help our children learn to function in a social classroom environment and to help them develop self-discipline to control their impulses. Children need guidance, reinforcement and rules from the beginning in order to learn respect for their own and others health and safety.
- Most children at our school readily adapt to the classroom environment. However, occasional unacceptable behaviors will manifest themselves in the classroom environment. This is natural and our teachers are extremely capable of handling most disruptions with minimal disturbance to the class.
- Behaviors which endanger other students such as, but not limited to, 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.
- The parents of a child who is having 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 problems, the staff and teachers will meet with the parents to discuss strategies that can be implemented at home and school in order to improve the child's behavior.
- In cases of continued incidents following conferencing and working with parents, expulsion may become necessary to protect the other children.

### **Allergy Statement**

At St. James' Nursery School we endeavor to provide a safe environment for all children. Each child must have on file a completed Student Allergy Information Sheet signed by the parent. We will take all reasonable precautionary measures to ensure your child's well being. In doing so, please be advised that for your child's health and safety protection, we post information concerning children's allergies in an area that is accessible to all staff. However, in the case of food allergies, you may be asked to provide your child's snack. Medications can only be kept on school premises and administered by staff with an accompanying Medication Order Form completed by the parent. Parents are encouraged to speak to the director and their child's teacher concerning special needs and allergies.

### **Nut-Free Facility**

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

### **Health Policy**

- Our health policy is defined in order to protect the well child and promote the best environment for the sick child. Children in good health are expected to attend school each day. If a child shows obvious behavioral or dietary change or other symptoms which could precede an illness, please consider keeping the child at home.
- Should a child exhibit any of the following symptoms within 24 hours before school, the child **MUST** remain at home: **Fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, undiagnosed rash, boil, on-going cough, congestion, non-clear runny nose, "pink-eye", head lice, or any of the contagious diseases. A child must also remain at home for 24 hours AFTER the symptoms subside.**
- **Teachers (with the approval of The Director) may refuse to accept children who exhibit any of the symptoms listed above.**
- **The school is to be informed at once if a child contracts a communicable disease.**
- A child who, due to a temporary health condition, cannot play outside should remain at home or arrangements can be made with the teacher to pick up the child prior to outdoor time.
- Should a child become ill at school, a parent will be called. The decision to allow the child to remain will be made by the Director and teacher.

### **Incidents, Injury or Accidents**

An Incident Report will be completed by staff on the day of an injury, incident or accident. Parents will be asked to sign the report at pick-up time.

### **Medical Emergencies**

- In the event of an accident, appropriate first aid procedures will be administered. If necessary, emergency medical services will be called, and if deemed necessary, the child will be transported to the hospital by ambulance. The parent will be notified as soon as possible.
- When an ambulance is called to the school to transport a child as a result of an injury or illness, the patient becomes the responsibility of the paramedics with the ambulance service upon their arrival at the scene. The Director or designate may assist the technician for the comfort of the patient. However, the Director or designate is no longer responsible for decision making or care of the patient.
- The Director or designate will accompany the child in the ambulance or follow by car.

- Parent will be notified that the child is being taken to the hospital; if the parent cannot be reached at the time, a child needing attention in an emergency situation will be sent to the hospital and the parent reached as soon as possible.
- Ambulance procedure is to transport the person to the nearest or most appropriate hospital. The particular unit is the decision of ambulance personnel.

### **Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect Procedures**

State law requires staff members to report any suspected child abuse to Protective Services. Failure to report such an incident is against the law.

### **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 Main Street and Annex locations. This also applies to all St. James functions; including field trips.

### **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, with or without identification by name. If you do not wish to have your child appear in a videotape or photograph or have his/her voice reproduced on tape, please notify the 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, you should address your concerns directly to the director in writing.

## **Family Involvement and Communication**

Families and schools represent the two main environments in which young children grow and develop. Because the family and our 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.

### **Parent Night**

Prior to the start of each new school year, parents are invited to attend a Parent Night. We politely ask for children not to attend this meeting; this is an information orientation for parents

### **Parent Orientation**

Parents are also invited each Fall to a parent orientation presentation and meeting hosted by our Director. All new parents to our school are encouraged to attend one of these orientations.

### **Parent Volunteers**

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 class can be an enriching experience for you, your child, and the entire class. *All volunteers will need to attend a Volunteer Training session prior to helping in a classroom.* The Nursery Office will also make requests for volunteers to help with the Spring Book Fair, End-of-the-Year Picnics, etc. Your help is greatly appreciated.

### **Newsletters and Classroom Calendars**

A school newsletter and classroom calendars will come home with your child every month so that you will be able to know what your child is doing and also any needs that we have. Special projects, topics, activities, and trips are announced in a monthly preschool newsletter. Newsletters and other information sent home can be translated into a home language, as needed. **Please be sure to carefully read both the school newsletter and the classroom calendar.**

### **Classroom Wipe-and-Write Boards**

Outside of each classroom you will find boards that are changed daily to describe the planned activities for the day and special reminders. Please read your child's classroom board daily.

### **Website**

The St. James' Nursery School website at [www.stjamesmtairy.org](http://www.stjamesmtairy.org) has the yearly calendar and monthly newsletter available for your perusal.

### **E-Mail**

Occasional e-mails are sent to families to inform them of school related information, such as field trip and school closing reminders.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in January with all parents. Classes will be cancelled at this time. Completed Developmental checklists are sent home in May to parents. Feel free to discuss any concerns or questions with a preschool teacher anytime throughout the year.

### **Program Evaluations**

Evaluations of the preschool program will be distributed to parents annually. Evaluations can be dropped off at your preschool site or mailed directly to the program manager, and all responses will remain anonymous. Please take the opportunity to complete the evaluations; your input is very important in continuing to provide a successful preschool program for the community.

## **OUR PROGRAM**

### **Curriculum**

St. James' Nursery School's curriculum is based on *The Creative Curriculum*, the Maryland Model for School Readiness, the Work Sampling System (published by Pearson), and the Maryland Voluntary Curriculum early learning standards. We also follow the curriculum goals of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which encourages children to be actively involved in the learning process, to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials, and to pursue their own interests in the context of life in the community and the world. Our theme schedule is provided to parents at the beginning of each school year. Developmental outcome/objectives for each age level are included in the appendix of this handbook.

### **Developmentally Appropriate Instruction**

Play is the primary vehicle of learning for the young child. Play allows the child to experiment, explore and manipulate his/her environment, while developing imagination and creativity. Engaging in symbolic play allows a young child to express his or her thoughts and ideas, practice and rehearse new roles, and test out newly acquired knowledge and skill. Young children construct knowledge based on their real-life experiences; they learn by doing. Children increase their own 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. The use of work sheets and drill instructional practices is

avoided, with instruction being integrated across traditional subject areas in order to provide a meaningful framework for learning.

### **Student Teacher Ratio**

Classes are limited in size in order that the children may receive as much individual attention as possible. Should a lower/greater number of children advance to any given age level due to variations in enrollment, the following student-teacher ratios may vary slightly. Student-teacher ratio is typically 10:2 for Twos Classes; 15:2 for Three year olds classes and 18:2 for Pre-Kindergarten Fours and Four/Fives Classes. All classrooms have a Teacher and Assistant Teacher.

### **Assessment Process**

St. James' staff monitors children progress on an ongoing basis by gathering data through observation, work sampling, digital photos, 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 curriculum and adapt their teaching practices. A detailed Developmental Checklist will be discussed at the parent-teacher conference in January. During this conference the Developmental Checklist is reviewed and discussed. This assessment report will be completed for the second term and sent home to parents in May before the school year ends. If parents desire a conference during the year, please inform your child's classroom teacher.

### **Adjusting to School**

At the beginning of the school year classes are scheduled to start on a staggered schedule to accommodate having a smaller class size and/or a shorter class time for the first two classes. In the 2's and 3's classes parents are asked to remain with their child for a portion/all of the class time. We want to ensure a smooth transition for all children and parents. Parents, please remember that we are only a call away. Phones are located in all classrooms, not only for safety reasons, but also so our parents can speak to teachers directly.

### **Dressing for School**

Please dress your child comfortably in clothing that they can manage themselves. Check the weather each morning and dress accordingly. We will go outside to play every day unless it is raining or is extremely cold. For children's safety, they must wear shoes appropriate for playground use (no flip-flops, sandals, jellies and crocs). **Please mark all coats, sweaters, hats and boots with your child's name.**

### **Tote Bags**

All children are asked to bring a two-handled open tote-bag (approximately 8x10 inches) to school each day. Please label the bag clearly with your child's name. Tote-bags are available in the office for purchase.

### **Snacks and Birthdays**

We provide healthy snacks and drinks during the school year. However, on your child's birthday, you may provide a birthday treat for the class. Please keep the party simple – we suggest cookies, muffins, brownies, ice cream cups, cupcakes. Please remember that St. James' Nursery School is a **nut-free facility**. We will supply the drink. Please schedule birthday snack with teacher a week in advance so we may avoid any conflicts in our schedule. If your child's birthday falls during the summer months, you may select a day for a pretend birthday.

### **Class Holiday Parties**

Celebrating Halloween, Christmas, Valentine, and Easter is important and fun for children. However, save your elaborate parties and favors for home. In the children's best interest, the simpler school parties are the better. A sign-up sheet for holiday parties and special days will be available at Parent Night in August. If you sign up to help in the classroom other arrangements must be made for siblings.

### **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, the 3's and Pre-K classes will be scheduled to visit the sanctuary for a brief (10-15 minute) chapel time. Annex Chapel Time will be held in the classroom. The 2's classes will participate in a short movement and song chapel time, in the classroom, with the director beginning in December. Parents are more than welcome to attend. Chapel time will be led by the Nursery School Director, Patricia Castle and/or the Church Rector, The Rev. Portia Hirschman.

### **Field Trips**

Field Trips to interesting and educational places in the area are an integral part of our curriculum. Parents will be notified beforehand and a completed, signed permission slip must be on file with our Nursery School in order for your child to attend any field trip. Transportation for most field trips is provided by parents. While we are a very family-oriented Nursery School, there will be some field trips offered that siblings will be invited to join us and others where we will ask that siblings do not attend. Throughout the year, various Community Helpers visit our classrooms (parents are encouraged to serve in this capacity!).

## SCHOOL CLOSING PROCEDURES

1. When Carroll County Schools are closed due to bad weather, St. James' Nursery School, **both locations**, will also be closed.
2. When Carroll County Schools open one **or** two hours late:
  - ~ All A.M. classes and full-day classes will begin one hour late at 10:00am and dismiss at the regularly scheduled time
  - ~ PM classes are held as scheduled
3. If Carroll County Schools dismiss early, we will not hold PM classes and the full-day classes will dismiss at 12:00.
4. Inclement weather and emergency closing days may be made up within the school year whenever possible, as follows:
  - If more than six days are missed for the five day a week classes
  - 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
  - If more than two days are missed for the one day a week classes
  - Beyond that, classes will be made up after Memorial Day, as necessary, up to June 13.
5. 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.
6. We will endeavor to contact parents in the exception of the above policy. If you are unsure of closings, please call the nursery school office at 301-829-0014 to listen to the Emergency Announcement Message.

(Revised 2/09)