

Parent Handbook 2020-2021

Welcome To St. Philip's Nursery School



This handbook is a guide to help you and your child have a successful preschool experience. We have included some of our most predictable practices and expectations. **We have also included on the next page the protocols that are new to us this September to keep children and staff safe during the COVID-19 epidemic.** Please always feel free to speak to a teacher about any concern you may have during the course of the year. **Safety is our most important priority.**

Mission Statement

The mission of St. Philip's Nursery School is to provide a preschool experience for the two, three and four year old children of our community that will encourage them to be active, confident, creative, curious learners, well-prepared for further education and lifelong learning.

In our preschool, children gain responsibility and respect for themselves and others, build friendships, and play and explore cooperatively. We affirm, respect, and nurture the uniqueness of each child as we help our students develop intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally.

We carry out our mission in harmony with our community of parents and with the fellowship of St. Philip's Church. We acknowledge and respect all religious traditions.

COVID-19 New Procedures

These are the new protocols and guidelines we will be following at St. Philip's.

1. Before leaving home, parents should complete an online health questionnaire, either on our Google Form or on Brightwheel.
2. Drop-off and pick-up will be staggered. Ducks (4s) will attend from 8:45 to 11:45; Blue Rabbits (3s) will attend from 9 to 12; and Red Rabbits (2s) will attend from 9:15 to 12:15. However, siblings of different ages may arrive together at any of these times.
3. All drop-off and pick up will be at the front, red door.
4. On arrival, parents will sign in electronically using Brightwheel (a back-up clipboard will also be available).
5. Staff will take the child's temperature using non-contact thermometers.
6. Children will say goodbye at the door. Ducks will be taken to wash their hands upstairs and rabbits will wash their hands downstairs.
7. Children will be in two (or three) groups of no more than 15 children each. (This is a change from the summer guidelines of 10). The two groups will stay separate throughout the morning. Ducks will learn and play using the upstairs space; rabbits will learn and play using the downstairs space.
8. Both groups will have snack upstairs but at different times. (All surfaces will be disinfected in-between.) Teachers will serve snack; children will have separate servings.
9. Both groups will use our outdoor spaces as much as possible, but will be in different locations.
10. Staff will wear masks and smocks all morning; children will not wear masks.
11. The downstairs art room will be used for art and science activities by different groups on alternate days and disinfected in between. Children will have their own art supplies kept in individual bins.
12. Because children must wash hands before dismissal, all children will be picked up at the front door. Parents and caregivers will use Brightwheel to sign out.

Toys, equipment and surfaces will be washed as needed and disinfected with spray at the end of every day. Our custodian, Tony Marcellin, also cleans and vacuums every morning before school begins.

Note: We are a private not-for-profit morning preschool not associated with a larger school; we follow the New York State guidelines for Child Care Programs. See the link on our Website: stphilipsnursery.org

Brightwheel

This is a new software product we have just recently adopted. It is used for teacher-parent communication during and after school, automatic check in and pick up, and also allows for automatic bill-paying. Please try and get familiar with Brightwheel before the start of school.

Calendar

Generally, St. Philip's has followed the Garrison School calendar. For 2020/2021, there may be times when we don't. We usually end earlier for the December holidays and in June. In addition, there are always some days that are different for Garrison and Haldane and other neighboring school districts. A copy of the calendar is sent to each family; in addition, you can check it on the website: www.stphilipsnursery.org.

Celebrations

We celebrate children's birthdays in a low-key way; they are special helpers and we sing to them at snack time. Parents usually send in a special snack (anything from fruit to cupcakes). In June, we usually hold an ice cream sundae party for all children with summer birthdays. PLEASE REMEMBER OUR NUT-FREE POLICY when planning food for school.

We have held a Christmas sing-a-long with refreshments in mid-December, and our graduation is in mid-June. These events will be different this year. We also celebrate Valentine's Day, Hannukah, Chinese and Japanese New Year's, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, and any other holiday on request.

Class List

We provide a list of all students' addresses and phone numbers. Please keep these confidential. Also, please keep us up-to-date with your contact information, so that we can update this sheet.

Clothing at School

All the paint and markers we buy are "washable," and children wear smocks while painting, but stains and spills sometimes happen. The best clothes for school are

comfortable, broken-in items. Pants and sneakers are recommended. For children who are still new to potty-training, elastic waists are good.

The children will be outside every day when possible, so please dress them in weather-appropriate clothes. Remember hats and mittens in the winter.

Please mark sweaters, jackets and coats with your child's name.

Change of Clothing

Please provide TWO changes of clothes for your child in a labeled Ziploc bag. These are for changing into in the event of accidents. Each child has a cubby, or plastic box. We do have an inventory of clean used clothing if there is nothing in your child's cubby.

Closings/Cancellations

When snow forces the Garrison School to close, we close.

If Garrison has a two-hour delay in opening, St. Philip's will have a one-hour delay, opening at 10 a.m. If Garrison closes early, we will use our judgment as to whether we close early or at 12 noon. We will notify you using text and Brightwheel.

Discipline and School Rules

Children learn through making mistakes, and through hearing rules and guidelines repeated over and over again. We try to use just a few rules and to use them positively. No hurting others is a big one. Also: walking feet, indoor voices, watching eyes, listening ears, and helping hands. We explain all these at length to the children at the beginning of school.

If a child is having trouble, he or she may sit in a "Calm-down chair" for a few minutes until they are ready to rejoin the group. Depending on what we are doing, this chair is also sometimes known as a "Sit-and-watch chair," and can be chosen voluntarily by a child who does not want to participate in the activity. A child who frequently requires extra help to cope with the rules is in need of attention, and we will talk with you.

Emergencies

In an emergency, we will try to reach you as quickly as possible by phone. Please keep us up-to-date with your phone numbers, as well as numbers for trusted friends and relatives. Our plan is to call you as quickly as possible and have you take your children from school. If you cannot be reached, we will rely on the alternate contacts provided

on the Emergency Form for your child. Please make an Emergency Plan for your family and include your neighbors.

Field Trips

Our usual tradition is to go on one field trip each spring. This is to the Bear Mountain Zoo on a bus, usually the last week in May. This year, it is difficult to predict what the spring will bring, but we will try and get one in. St. Philip's bears the cost and provides snacks on these outings. Parents and siblings are welcome to come along.

Folders

Your child will have a folder of artwork and parent handouts from the staff to take home. We will send these home in reusable bags at the end of each week.

Fundraising

St. Philip's Nursery School is a program of St. Philip's Church-in-the-Highlands, a non-profit Episcopal church. The Church provides our space, insurance, and utilities free of charge. Nursery School tuition revenues cover teacher salaries and basic expenses. Fundraising helps provide for equipment, financial assistance, and staff development.

Traditionally, each spring, the Nursery School holds a White Elephant Sale. This large indoor garage sale includes clothing, household items, books, and toys. Parent volunteer support is essential to the success of the Sale, which provides much-needed additional funding. Other smaller fundraising efforts are planned by the Parent Committee. This year, we will probably hold a virtual event of some sort.

Hours

We are a three-hour morning preschool program; (by State law our official hours are 5 minutes less than 3 hours). **For the 2020/2021 school year, we will have staggered dropoff and pickup to ease the wait time for parents:**

- Parents of **Ducks (4 year olds) arrive at 8:45 and pick up at 11:45.**
- Parents of **Blue Rabbits (3 year olds) arrive at 9 and pick up at 12.**
- Parents of **Red Rabbits (2 year olds) arrive at 9:15 and pick up at 12:15.**

Siblings of different ages are welcome to arrive together at any of these times.

Parents and children are welcome to stay and play on the St. Philip's playground after school is over. Please wear masks, use social distancing and use hand sanitizer. As a

courtesy, we do not charge late fees. Please call the Nursery School Director at 845-598-0575 if you are unavoidably delayed.

Parent Communication

We communicate with parents through phone calls, e-mail, texts, a monthly newsletter, and - new this year - Brightwheel. Even though parents are not allowed in the school building from 9 to 12, you can make an appointment with Anita Prentice, Interim Director, or any teacher to speak before, during, or after school about questions, concerns, and observations. We will have a Fall Parent Night via Zoom, and parent-teacher conferences in the spring as well as whenever you request one. You are your child's first teachers, and we want to help you as much as possible.

Parent Committee

We are fortunate to have a dedicated committee of parents who organize events to build community, provide parent education, have fun, and assist with fundraising. They communicate directly with you.

Peanut Allergy

We have children enrolled who are severely allergic to peanuts and other nuts. We do not use peanut butter or any nut products (and coconut is considered a nut). Please try to think of alternatives on the occasions when you are preparing food for your child at school. If your child has a food allergy, please bring in some safe snacks to keep in the freezer for special occasions.

Personnel

Our teachers are considered essential personnel. In addition, the Reverend Amanda Eiman, her assistant Micki Bless, and our custodian Tony Marcellin are considered essential personnel. No other adults will be in the building during Nursery School hours.

Playground

We will be outside with the children on most days even with rain and snow. Please dress your child accordingly. And please label coats, mittens, hats, and boots with your child's name. If you send your child to school in boots please send indoor shoes as well.

You and your children are welcome to stay on our playground after school hours. The safety of the children is everyone's first priority. The St. Philip's Parish House parking lot can be busy. If you choose to stay after 12 noon, please keep tabs on your child/children and accompany them if they leave the playground.

If you do bring snacks and lunches for after school, please refrain from serving them until all children have been picked up. All children are hungry after a busy morning and this way we do not have to worry about food allergies, dietary restrictions, or disappointing the children who don't have treats.

Separation

Generally, children and parents learn to part with few difficulties. Separation can be much more challenging for some children, and we will work with you to make the process as reassuring as possible.

For the first three days of school, we will end at 11 a.m. to give the children a chance to get accustomed to school. So that we can get skilled in our new procedures, the **Ducks only will attend on Wednesday, September 9; the Rabbits only on Thursday, September 10, and everyone on Friday, September 11.**

Signing In and Out/Pick Up Instructions

When you, your spouse, or caregiver bring your child to the front door in the mornings, you will sign in using Brightwheel on our iPad. Brightwheel will give you a code that you or your designated caregiver will use, or a QR code can be used. When you, your spouse, or your caregiver pick up your child at the end of the day, you will repeat the procedure. (We will have a back-up clipboard in case.) If you have any changes or issues, please call the Interim Director at 845-424-4209 or 845-598-0575.

St. Philip's Church

The Nursery School is an Episcopal preschool with a nondenominational curriculum. We are a program of St. Philip's Church in the Highlands. We are fortunate to have with us as a parent the new St. Philip's Rector, the Reverend Amanda Eiman. Amanda will join us from time to time to share stories and conversation.

Snack

This year will be quite different than previous years. Ducks and rabbits will not have snack at the same time. Teachers will not be sitting with the children, although we will be closeby, and there will be distanced conversation. Children will sit three to a table. There is a simple grace before eating or drinking; this is not a long wait but does provide some practice in deferring gratification, which is one of the steps on the road to emotional maturity.

Snack is alternately crackers, graham crackers, pretzels and the like, as well as fruit or vegetables. About once a month, we have a cooking project with the children, now adapted to COVID-19 guidelines. Children are offered the choice of water or milk to drink. These will be served by the teachers, and each child will be given their own plate.

Toys Brought to School

No toys from home can be brought in to school. We teach the children that all the toys here are for sharing, and, indeed, learning to share is one of the most important things a young child can accomplish. If a child has his or her own toy, other children will want to play with it, which can cause conflict for the toy's owner.

Having said that, there are some toys that are clear comfort objects, reducing the fear of school for the children who need them. These are usually stuffed animals. We will allow these at the start of school but they will need to be used by the child only in a limited space and on as limited a basis as possible. We recognize that each child is unique and we try to encourage self-confidence so that the need for a comfort object diminishes.

Stuffed animals and dolls are important toys that help children develop their nurturing skills—their emotional intelligence, if you will. We have lots of dolls (although cuddly animals have been put away), so you can help by reminding your child that we have plenty of fun toys at school.

We have traditionally had some “Show and Tell” days, when children can bring in items and talk about them. These are often theme-related, such as a favorite book. We will now adapt COVID-19 guidelines to accommodate this. We always welcome nature items, or special family news like a new baby or puppy.

Tuition

Tuition is charged by the term or by the year, and may be paid in monthly installments. Unless other arrangements have been made, tuition is payable on the first day of the month. Payments through Brightwheel are encouraged.

Weapons

We teach peaceful problem-solving, so no toy guns, swords, weapons, or action figures carrying such are allowed at any time. Our message is: “Weapons hurt people, and that’s not good.”

We do remember that young children have played with pretend weapons since time immemorial. There are times when children’s need for a pretend weapon is a signal that something is bothering them; they may be distressed about something and feel the need for a “weapon” to defend them or keep them safe. We will let you know if we notice anything like this.

When Your Child Is Sick...

In these COVID-19 times, the best thing you can do for your family and your community is keep your sick children at home. Children often need rest to recover from a bad cold. We will ask you to take them home if they show signs of a serious/communicable illness or condition (including conjunctivitis and head lice). If your child has a fever over 100 on arrival at school, you will be asked to take him/her home. If a child shows symptoms of COVID-19 (fever over 100 or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea), you will be called and asked to take her/him home and be tested for COVID-19. (We will keep her/him separated from other children while we wait for your arrival). Children may return when they have a negative test result. In general, physicians recommend that a child stay home for 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics as well as remain home for 24 hours after a return to normal temperature after a fever.

Thank you very much for understanding and complying with these policies.

Please call the director if you have questions on any issue not addressed in this handbook. Thank you for choosing St. Philip’s for your child’s preschool experience.