

## Parent Handbook 2021-2022

# 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 we will continue 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, in partnership with St. Philip's Episcopal Church, is to provide a vibrant and nurturing preschool experience for the two, three and four -year old children of our community, encouraging them to be active, confident, curious, and well-prepared for further education and lifelong learning.*

*At St. Philip's, children gain responsibility and respect for themselves and others, build friendships, and interact cooperatively. Play is at the heart of learning at St. Philip's. Believing that children learn by doing, teachers encourage students to explore their surroundings, and work with a wide variety of materials to create, build, and experiment. We affirm the uniqueness of each child as we value and support their development intellectually, socially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. We welcome children of all faiths, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family structures. The Nursery School Committee oversees the Preschool.*

## COVID-19 Procedures

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

1. Drop-off and pick-up will be the same for all groups and the school day consists of a 9am-12pm schedule.
2. Drop-off and pick-up for Ducks and Blue Rabbits will be at the front, red door. Drop-off and pick-up for Rabbits will be at the rear stairwell door.
3. On arrival, parents will sign in electronically using Brightwheel.
4. On arrival, parents will complete a health questionnaire on Brightwheel.
5. Children will say goodbye at the door. Ducks and Blue Rabbits will be taken to wash their hands upstairs and Red Rabbits will wash their hands downstairs.
6. The groups will stay separate throughout the morning. Ducks will learn and play using the upstairs space; Blue Rabbits will have their own classroom; Red Rabbits will learn and play using the downstairs space. However, there will be times when the Blue Rabbits and Ducks will be outside together at the same time.
7. Both groups will be in their respective spaces inside or outside to have snack (All surfaces will be disinfected in-between) Teachers will serve snack; children will have separate servings.
8. Both groups will use our outdoor spaces as much as possible, but will be in different locations.
9. Staff will wear masks inside; children will wear masks indoors except at snack time, outside and during mask breaks.
10. The downstairs art room will be used for art and science activities by different groups on rotation and disinfected in between.
11. Because children must wash hands before dismissal, all children will be picked up at either the front door or the rear stairwell 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, disinfects, 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](http://stphilipsnursery.org)*

## **Brightwheel**

This is a new software product we adopted last year. 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 get familiar with Brightwheel by loading the app on your phone as well as using it on your computer.

## **Calendar**

Generally, St. Philip's has followed a hybrid of the Garrison and Haldane School calendar. For 2021/2022 there will 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](http://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, Hanukkah, 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**

Children should arrive dressed for play. 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, along with an extra mask (labeled with your child's name). 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.

## **School Rules**

There are certain school rules that all children will be taught and expected to follow. This is for the safety and well being of everyone. The rulemaking process will be one that the preschoolers will be a part of, in order to help them establish a sense of “belonging” in their new school.

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. “Not 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.

## **Student Expectations**

### **Guidance and Discipline:**

In keeping with the mission and Core Values of St. Philip's Nursery School, our discipline policies guide children in the development of developmentally appropriate social skills. We want each student to grow in kindness, honesty, respect and consideration for others. Teachers carefully plan the classroom environment to encourage and foster peaceful living, cooperation and collaboration. Young children are still learning the problem-solving skills to express their feelings in appropriate ways.

Teachers model sharing, talking about feelings, respect for others and problem solving. We purposefully teach respect, responsibility, kindness, manners and an awareness of the needs and rights of others. Expectations for behavior are clearly delineated and discussed with the students on a regular basis. Cooperative and respectful behavior is praised and kind acts are modeled and noted.

The safety of each child is our highest priority. In our classrooms, conflict can often be deterred with redirection, reminders and the provision of alternate choices. When teachers have established a relationship of trust and respect, they may move an uncooperative child with gentle, verbal encouragement. Children are reminded of previously learned rules and expectations and prompted to respect the needs of others. Sometimes, privileges are withdrawn so they can learn the connection between their actions and logical consequences. Aggressive behavior is stopped immediately and calmly by the teachers and discussed privately with the child or children involved. A young child may be asked to sit quietly to regain self-control and may be removed from the activities of the other children for a short time, but children are never completely isolated from others.

**Parental Involvement:** Communication with families is at the heart of any guidance program. We welcome communication and initiate both formal and informal conferences. The school and families work together to resolve discipline problems and to plan for guidance. Learning discipline and good decision-making skills is a process. The efforts of the faculty, the parents and the administrators are all important in the creation of an optimal learning environment.

## **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 pick up your child 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**

Field Trips are an exciting way to enhance our curriculum. Parents may be responsible for the transportation to field trips that are a longer distance away. There may also be fees associated with the trip. Prior to any field trip, parents will be required to sign a permission slip that we will carry (including their emergency form). Teachers also take a fully stocked first aid kit on every trip. If this year we are not able to fit in a field trip, we will have on site enrichment programs for the children.

## **Projects & Take Home Work**

Your child will have 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**

SPNS invites families, grandparents and friends to support our school through personal philanthropy and employer matching gift opportunities. An essential prong of compensating talented faculty and covering annual school operational expenses, fundraising is a community endeavor. The School and Church are not-for-profit, and the Church provides our space, insurance, and utilities free-of-charge.

Each family will be solicited annually to participate in some form of giving to the school, at whatever level they are able to give. In recent years, a spring fundraising effort paired with a child-free community-building event have helped advance our mission and fund our programs. Covid-permitting, the Nursery School also traditionally raises funds through several annual White Elephant or Holiday sales, where community members donate gently used items, baked goods and their time.

## **Hours**

We are a three-hour morning preschool program; (by State law our official hours are 5 minutes less than 3 hours). **Our hours are 9am - 12pm.**

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.

We understand that things can happen to delay a pickup or drop-off. Please call the Nursery School Director at 845-424-4209 if you are unavoidably delayed. **However, if we notice that this begins to become a habit and you are consistently late, we will charge a late fee that we deem appropriate.**

## **Parent Communication**

We communicate with parents through phone calls, e-mail, texts, a monthly newsletter, and Brightwheel. Even though parents are not allowed in the school building from 9 to 12, you can make an appointment with Betsy Alberty, Director or any teacher to speak before 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 are a NUT FREE FACILITY. 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 two days of school (Thursday, September 9th and Friday, September 10th) we will end at 11 a.m. to give the children a chance to get accustomed to school.

## **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 or phone. 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 Director at 845-424-4209.



## **Chapel**

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, St. Philip's Rector, the Reverend Amanda Eiman. We will join Amanda once a week in the Church with the Blue Rabbits and Ducks for chapel time, which consists of nondenominational stories and prayers and conversation. The Red Rabbits will meet with Amanda in their classroom downstairs for a short story or songs. These sessions will align with themes within the curriculum and life lessons.

## **Snack**

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. 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 water and based on the holiday juice or milk as well. 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 into 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.

## **SAFETY and SECURITY PROCEDURES**

### Expectations for Parents in Emergency Response Situations

It is common for concerned parents to immediately come to the school in response to an emergency situation. This is a natural parental reaction to the possibility that a child may be in danger. It is important to know that your preschool developed a set of detailed plans to ensure the safety of your child and the general school population. The following information is offered to increase your understanding of these measures and expectations for your response to help St. Philip's Nursery School staff successfully manage an emergency.

### Emergency Response Procedures

#### Early Dismissal Plan

In the event of an emergency such as those that are weather related, loss of electricity, or lack of water, etc. we will put into place an early dismissal procedure. In these situations, time permits us to call all parents or emergency contacts to pick up children at the preschool. We will contact you or the person listed on your child's emergency form. We ask that all parents make sure these phone numbers are updated.

#### Lockdown

The **lockdown** is a security procedure used when there is an imminent danger present **in the building** (intruder, hazardous material) and we want staff and students to **remain in the building but out of harm's way**. It requires immediate police response to the building and includes:

- Removing all students and staff to designated secured areas;
- Locking doors, turning off lights;
- Taking attendance
- Remaining quiet until an "all clear" is sounded by police or a person in authority.

The lockdown is primarily designed to take all individuals out of harm's way in anticipation of a police response to the scene.

#### Lockout

The lockout is a security procedure used when there is a potential danger against an individual **outside the school or when a danger exists in the vicinity outside of the school**. It is used when there is a threat to the school, students and staff from outside the school and when the school is the safest place to be sheltered. It requires an immediate police response and includes consideration of the following actions:

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| *Limited vehicle access              | *Increase supervision at arrival and dismissal |
| *Police presence                     | *No outside recess                             |
| *Exterior doors locked and monitored | *Windows covered and curtains drawn            |
| *Monitored single point of entry     | *Limited and controlled visitations            |

**Desired Parent Response:** Remain at home to receive updated information. This will be communicated through Brightwheel, email or phone call. The school is functioning in a normal fashion except for outside activities. Staff is on high alert and police are on

alert to offer protection and direction. Parents coming to school will complicate the response by school staff and emergency providers.

### Sheltering Plan

**Sheltering** is a security procedure used in response to natural disasters, weather-related, environmental or accident-related emergencies. Variations include:

- In class “duck and cover” procedures in response to surprise weather-related events.
- Evacuation and sheltering to designated areas in the church (corners of sanctuary) with structural integrity.

### Evacuation

Evacuation is when students and staff are removed from harm's way, and away from the building. Types of evacuation include walking away from building with staff during a:

- Fire drill, when siren is heard and teachers are expected to follow fire drill procedures;
- Unsafe conditions in the building such as gas leak or water main break.

Students walk away from the building to a designated location such as the Garrison Elementary School.

**Desired Parent Response:** Wait until the emergency has passed, listen for information about evacuation procedures and follow directions of school or church personnel. This information will be communicated via phone, email, and radio.

**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.**