PARENT HANDBOOK



ST. JOHN'S CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

4629 Aspen Hill Rd, Rockville, MD 20853 301-946-4977

www.sjkidspreschool.org

Mission: To shepherd growing and developing children in a Christian environment.

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"Play is the work of the child"

Maria Montessori

St. John's Christian Preschool admits students of any race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies and athletic and other school administered programs.

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WELCOME

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In 1966 a group of concerned parents at St. John's felt a need to provide an educational experience for their preschool age children in a Christian environment. To fulfill this need, they organized the St. John's Lutheran Preschool, a non-profit organization to be operated by St. John's Lutheran Church. The preschool was established for the purpose of promoting the mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth of children under professional supervision and guidance through a comprehensive program of instruction with a daily emphasis on Christian attitudes.

In the summer of 1994, the school became incorporated under the name of St. John's Lutheran Preschool, Inc. This is the corporate entity that operates and governs the school.

Through the years the program has continued to expand and serve the Rockville / Aspen Hill community.

In May of 2000 the school's name was changed to St. John's Christian Preschool to reflect the significance of our mission statement - "To shepherd growing and developing children in a Christian environment."

The preschool is staffed by a director, dedicated teachers, assistants and a treasurer. The entire staff is constantly striving to instill in the children a positive self-image, realizing that a child with self-esteem is more likely to develop into a loving and caring adult. Our pastor makes his contributions to the program with the weekly chapel services.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors consists of members of St. John's Lutheran Church and the Preschool Director. The Pastor and Bookkeeper are ex-officio members. The Board of Directors determines school policies, hires the director and bookkeeper and sets the budget. Members currently meeting monthly include:

Brenda Sterling (Director)
Chris Howard
Tom Hickman
Janine Speakman
Kendra Wells
Laurine Cooke
Danielle Ring (Bookkeeper)

PRESCHOOL STAFF

All teachers meet or exceed the Maryland State Department of Education requirements. All assistants are experienced in working with young children.

Director

Brenda Sterling

Teachers and Assistants

Samudra Ekanayake, Grace Kwon, Maria Luzon, Loris Salina

Substitute Teachers

Laurine Cooke, Charlotte Spada

SCHOOL REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

ENROLLMENT AND ADMISSION

- 1. Applicants for St. John's Christian Preschool **should** be at least 2, 3 or 4 years old by **September 1st** of the year they enter for the 2, 3 and 4-year-old classes, respectively. On occasion, age exceptions can be made in our two-year-old class (based on child's maturity). School policy requires children to be toilet trained before entering the three- or four-year-old classroom. Students entering the two-year-old classroom are not required to be potty-trained.
- 2. A non-refundable registration fee and nonrefundable last month's tuition (May's tuition) are payable for each child with the application for admission. There is the option for families to split the May prepayment into 3 equal payments over 3 months.
- 3. Parents will receive written confirmation of acceptance within two weeks of the school's receiving completed registration papers and the deposit.
- 4. MEDICAL FORMS FURNISHED BY THE SCHOOL MUST BE SIGNED BY A PHYSICIAN AND FILED AT SCHOOL IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT. Immunizations must be current unless a contradiction exists. There are other required forms that will also be required of students/families.
- 5. Registration begins in January for the following school year. The priority rating system is as follows:
 - a. Children presently enrolled in St. John's Christian Preschool.
 - b. Children of confirmed members of St. John's Lutheran Church at time of registration.
 - c. Siblings of children presently enrolled in St. John's Christian Preschool.
 - d. Siblings of children who have attended St. John's Christian Preschool in the past 5 years, but not currently. e. Children in the community-at-large.
- 6. The school maintains a waiting list for all classes to cover any openings that might occur throughout the year.

TUITION AND REFUNDS

- 1. Monthly tuition payment shall be paid on or before the 1st of each month and is considered delinquent if not received by the 7th of the month and will incur a late fee of \$25.00. Parents may be asked to withdraw a child if tuition is more than one month delinquent.
- 2. All tuition shall be payable by cash, <u>check</u>, money order, online through an invoice or in person using our card reader with an added convenience fee. Any check returned by the bank will result in the charge of \$25.00; after a 2nd returned check, only cash or money order will be accepted as payment for the remainder of the school year.
- 3. <u>Mail tuition to</u>: St. John's Christian Preschool, 4629 Aspen Hill Road, Rockville, MD 20853. Teachers will not accept payment; you may drop off payment to the Director.
- 4. No adjustment of fees can be made by the school for absences, withdrawals or dismissals.
- 5. Tuition rates for 2025-2026 are as follows:

3-day (2's) class \$ 575.00 per month

5-day (2's) class \$ 825.00 per month

3-day (3's) class \$ 525.00 per month

3-day (4's) class \$ 525.00 per month

5 -day (3s or 4s) class \$750.00 per month

Aftercare rates for 2025-2026 are as follows:

3-day \$210 per month

5-day \$310 per month

WITHDRAWAL

- 1. The school reserves the right to request the withdrawal of any child for good and just cause.
- 2. A parent may withdraw a child at any time during the school year, but written notice must be given 30 days prior to departure.

ABSENCE, ILLNESS, ACCIDENTS AND TOILETING

- 1. Any child who shows signs of illness should not be sent to school. The health department stresses that a child with a yellow or green nasal discharge, temperature or other signs of illness should be kept at home. If a child becomes ill at school, we will contact the parents at once.
- 2. Parents should notify the school immediately if a child has been diagnosed as having a communicable disease.
- 3. Licensing regulation requires this school <u>not</u> re-admit a child after an absence due to illness for 3 days or more without first receiving a written statement from the physician indicating that the child may return to a regular schedule.
- 4. If an absence is anticipated, or if your child is unable to attend for any reason, please advise the child's teacher
- 5. If your child is on any medication, make sure the teacher is aware of this. Medication often causes behavioral changes.
- 6. If medication needs to be disbursed by school (including emergency medication), appropriate forms MUST be completed by parent and physician, prior to leaving medication at the school.
- 7. If your child is allergic to any foods, fibers, plants, animals, etc., be sure the teacher is aware of this and notate this information on appropriate forms.
- 8. Every precaution for safety is taken in school situations, but should an accident occur, appropriate first aid will be administered at the school and the parents notified. We will use the information on the emergency form on file to contact a relative/friend should the parent <u>not</u> be available. In extreme cases, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital, should such action be necessary.
- 9. Any child who has a bathroom accident at school will be changed at once, by the classroom teacher or assistant. Please ensure that your child always has an extra set of clothing at school (including underwear, socks and shoes).

SOLICITATION

The school maintains a non-solicitation policy. Class lists are not to be used for business purposes.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND SNOW DAYS

- 1. A calendar of school events and holidays is found on the last page of the school handbook. Please refer to this calendar for St. John's specific holidays.
- 2. If it is announced that Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are closed due to weather conditions, St. John's will also be closed. If MCPS has a two hour delay the preschool will open 1 hour late (at 10am). If MCPS closes early due to inclement weather, we will close at the same time.

ATTENDANCE

Parents (or designated person) are required to sign their children in and out of the school daily.

HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES

We observe numerous holidays with the children, including: Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter. Specifically, Halloween involves the fun of dress-up and pretend. At Christmas we place priority on the celebration of Jesus' birthday and make family gifts, cards, learn simple carols and read biblical stories. Valentine's Day finds us emphasizing family love and friendships. The children exchange valentines and make family valentines. Easter is the story of Easter Sunday wherein we highlight the resurrection and new life through age-appropriate books. Additional holidays and celebrations may be added throughout the year.

CHAPEL

- 1. Each week the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church will lead the children in a devotional service in the chapel. This reinforces their learning about the Christian faith, provides an opportunity for worship on their level and includes a prayer, a song and a brief Bible or Christian attitude story.
- 2. The teachers may read books or plan projects around the chapel theme.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIME

- 1. The preschool's classes operate on the following schedule:
 - 2s Class 9:00 1:00
 - 3s Class 9:00 1:00
 - 4s Class 9:00 1:00
 - 3s/4s combined class 9:00 to 1:00
 - Aftercare 1:00-3:00
- 2. Please be sure to arrive on time. For many children, arriving late causes uneasiness and a difficult start to the day.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

Any child not picked up within 5 minutes of dismissal will be taken to the office. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed after that time. The parents will be billed accordingly.

VISITORS

Parents of enrolled children are welcome to visit the classroom and chapel. Please schedule your visit with the teacher/ office in advance. If consultation with the teacher is desired, please arrange an appointment in order that class instruction not be interrupted.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Telephone messages may be sent to the staff and the Director during school hours at 301-946-4977. If you have a concern about your child, leave a message and the Director or your child's teacher will return your call promptly.

CLOTHING

- 1. PLEASE SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IN COMFORTABLE PLAY CLOTHES SUITABLE FOR PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES. Clothes may get dirty and soiled. Please wear closed toe shoes only! SNEAKERS are recommended and are safer for playground play.
- All removable articles of clothing must be labeled. Clothing the children wear should be as simple as possible, the right size, and
 in good repair, so that they can remove/put on all clothing themselves. Baggy clothes, cords and strings on clothing can become
 caught in playground equipment.
- 3. Children should be dressed according to the weather. Hats and mittens or gloves are necessary in cold weather. The children use the playground equipment during the winter. We follow MSDE rules regarding playground use and outdoor temperature.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAY PARTIES

- 1. Birthdays will be given a simple and uniform recognition. Parents may provide a small simple treat (suggestions include small cupcakes, small muffins, cookies, and donut holes).
- 2. We ask that parents distribute home party invitations outside of school. We provide a class directory for email purposes.
- 3. Special parties are held at Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter. Parents may be asked to donate special snacks for the children on these special occasions.

SNACKS AND LUNCH

- 1. Parents will provide a snack and a lunch daily.
- 2. All food items should be nut-free.
- 3. Please note that we will encourage all students to eat healthy food before treats.

FIELD TRIPS

- 1. We will go on two field trips. One in the fall and one in the spring. They are part of the program and include one hundred percent parent/guardian participation.
- 2. It is REQUIRED that all children wear the school T-shirt on all field trips. T-shirts will be available for purchase.

CONFERENCES

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES ARE HELD TWICE A YEAR. The specific dates are noted on the school calendar. The school is closed at this time to permit the parent-teacher exchanges to take place. Parents should sign up with the child's teacher for an appointment in advance. Additionally, parents may request additional conferences with either the teacher or Director at any time during the year by calling the school office for an appointment. The teacher may also request a conference as needed.

BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE EXPECTATIONS

Children are encouraged to exhibit positive, age-appropriate behaviors. Respect for others, consideration and cooperation are essential behavioral expectations. Staff and children work together to model and practice positive behaviors. Children who are in danger of hurting themselves or other classmates are redirected and given an opportunity to discuss and understand the ramifications of their behavior. A child's success and challenges are always communicated with parents. Good communication between home and school is important. On the rare occasion, when we are unable to adequately meet the needs of a child (after numerous conferences with parents, interventions and changes to programming), the director may suggest withdrawal from St. John's Christian Preschool.

NEWSLETTER

A newsletter will be published at the beginning of each month and will serve to keep parents informed of policies and upcoming events. '

SCHOOL FOLDER

Every child will be given a St. John's school folder that travels from home to school and back again each school day. Parents are responsible for checking the folder for school news, artwork, etc. Parents are responsible for checking the folder and returning any required communications. The "We Connect" page in the folder is designed for parents or teachers to write quick notes, questions, etc. It provides another opportunity for quick and easy two-way communication.

PARENT INFORMATION BOARD

We will use a parent information board, located inside to the right of the entrance doors, to keep you informed of monthly events. Such events will also be noted in the monthly newsletter.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Our school's philosophy is to keep all children safe while in our care. As required, all staff members are trained in the correct responses. We have an emergency plan to handle shelter in place, evacuation to another site and a method to contact parents. These are reviewed yearly. Detailed written documentation is in the office and classrooms.

DOORBELL

For security reasons, the outside doors leading into the preschool hall are locked when it is not arrival or dismissal time. Please ring the doorbell on the right-hand door frame if you need to enter the building during the "locked" times.

CONCERNS

- 1. It is requested that any concerns regarding a teacher-pupil relationship be referred to the teacher in question. If it is not satisfactorily resolved during an in-person conference, it should be referred to the Director.
- 2. Concerns of nature other than teacher-pupil should be referred to the Director who will, in turn, arrange a meeting with the parent at the earliest opportunity.

CHANGES IN SCHOOL REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

Changes in regulations and policies may be made when action becomes necessary for the betterment of the school. Families will be notified in writing of any changes made.

SCHOOL PROGRAM

OBJECTIVES

Our constitution states "St. John's Christian Preschool has been established for the purpose of promoting the mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth of children under professional supervision and guidance through a comprehensive program of instruction."

These goals are carried out in a loving, caring, Christian atmosphere where development of a child's self-esteem and independence is a priority.

GUIDELINES

- 1. Children should be actively involved in the learning process.
- 2. Play is the way children learn.
- 3. The environment, not the child, should be structured.
- 4. The school and parents must work together.

We stress process, not product. Therefore, you will often see a product that represents a culmination of a weekly activity, rather than a daily product. Many of our curriculum themes cover a week or more.

CURRICULUM THEMES

Our school is certified by the MSDE and therefore includes age-appropriate presentation of the seven key areas that comprise the Maryland Model for School Readiness for kindergarten. These areas are physical development, language/literacy skills, social/emotional development, mathematical thinking, social studies, and the arts.

SEPTEMBER

- Welcome Back to School-physical, social, and learning environment
- Me and My Family
- Self: Feelings and Emotions

OCTOBER

- Fall Weather
- Safety: Street, Strangers, Community
- Community Helpers

NOVEMBER

- Harvest (Vegetables, Fruits and Foods)
- Transportation
- Friendship

DECEMBER

- Christmas: Significance, Joy
- Holidays Around the World

JANUARY

- Winter Animals and Hibernation
- Winter Weather and Clothing
- 5 Senses

FEBRUARY

- Famous Scientists and Inventors
- Health and Wellness: My Body and Nutrition
- Leadership (presidents, kings, queens)

MARCH

- Spring Weather and Animals
- Classic Books and Stories
- Easter Significance and Joy

APRIL

- Life Cycles and Metamorphosis
- Celebrating the Earth (Flowers, plants, trees)
- Insects and Bugs

MAY

- Summer Weather
- Farewell and Moving Forward

ENRICHMENT

Our teachers incorporate music and movement and American sign language into the daily classroom lessons. This may include singing, learning about and playing instruments, preschool yoga, dancing, stories and various other interactive activities.

STAFF RATIO

Understanding that each child is a special and unique individual, every qualified and experienced staff member implements our program in a way that allows each child to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Our classrooms are staffed by a teacher and an assistant (based on student numbers). Our teacher-child ratio reflects our understanding of age differences and each child's need for individual attention.

2-year-olds 10 children per one teacher and one assistant

3-year-olds 14 children per one teacher and one assistant

4-year-olds18 children per one teacher and one assistant

DAILY ROUTINE

A typical day of preschool may include the following activities: arrival time (children play with table toys), opening exercises, show-and-tell, music, finger plays, outside play, snack/lunch, story, learning/circle games, dramatic play, inside play, and creative art. Working with children requires flexibility; the order and variety of activities may vary depending on circumstances and the age group. A dry erase board outside each classroom details the daily activities for parent preview.

ORIENTATION DAY/ MEET AND GREET

This "get acquainted" day provides an opportunity for each child to see their school and classroom and briefly meet teachers and classmates. Parents, too, have a chance to meet the staff and other parents, ask questions and receive the handbook and other important information.

THANKSGIVING CHAPEL

Parents and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend. We will have a school wide lunch on this day as well.

CHRISTMAS CHAPEL

The highlight of our Christmas season is the family Christmas service. All classes sing Christmas carols for their parents and friends. The Pastor contributes the Christmas story.

SPIRIT WEEK

An opportunity for fun, community building and school spirit. The special days will be shared far in advance for families.

EASTER CHAPEL

The students celebrate spring and Easter in song and the Pastor tells the story of Easter Sunday.

TEDDY BEAR PICNIC

Each child brings a teddy or other stuffed animal from home for the bears' picnic.

GRADUATION CHAPEL

We say good-bye to our pre-kindergarten children in a special ceremony. This family event features the children as they sing several favorite songs and the Pastor's special presentation, too. After the sanctuary program, staff, children, parents and friends enjoy refreshments.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

ROOM PARENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

We look forward to having volunteers in the classrooms this year. The opportunities are varied, but can include being a guest reader, teaching a simple craft, sharing family holiday traditions. We have a set team of Room Parents, one for each classroom.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT

This yearly event will provide parents the opportunity to meet Preschool Board members and Pastor. In addition, parents will hear from the school Director and have an opportunity to visit their child's classroom and hear from their teachers.

SHARING OF TALENTS, JOBS, AND CULTURES

Parents are our greatest asset. So many parents have special talents or abilities, interesting jobs, or a less-known cultural heritage to share. We would love for you to share your gifts and experiences with the children and our community. If you are interested in doing so, please contact your child's teacher and or the Director.

OPEN HOUSE

In February we hold our annual Open House for parents who wish to select a preschool program for the following fall. On this day, the Preschool Board of Directors, parents, and the Director are on hand to give building tours, make parents welcome as they observe the program in operation, provide registration forms, and answer questions.

2025-2026 School Calendar

*Dates are subject to change with notice

August

25-29 Teacher Prep Week

29- Student Orientation Meet and Greet

September

3 First Day of School

17 Back to School Night 7 pm

October

17 Professional Day for Teachers - NO SCHOOL

22 Fall Field Trip

31 Costume Parade 9:30 am

November

19 Thanksgiving Chapel 11:30

26-28 Thanksgiving Holiday - NO SCHOOL

December

10 Parent / Teacher Conferences- NO SCHOOL

17 Christmas Chapel 11:30

22 - Jan 2 Christmas Holiday NO SCHOOL

<u>January</u>

5 Classes Resume

19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day NO SCHOOL

February

4 Open House for Prospective Families

16 President's Day NO SCHOOL

March

20 Professional Dev for Teachers NO SCHOOL

25 Easter Chapel 11:30am

30-6 Easter Break

April

7-Classes Resume

Mav

8 Parent / Teacher Conferences NO SCHOOL

20 Preschool Graduation

22 Last Day of School

<u>June</u>

1-18 Summer Camp

^{*}Calendar dates are subject to change. Please follow the newsletter for any date changes.

ST. JOHN'S CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL 4629 ASPEN HILL ROAD ROCKVILLE, MD 20853 301-946-4977 director@sjkidspreschool.org

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2024

The best things you can give children, next to good habits, are good memories.

~Sydney J. Harris