

# PARENT HANDBOOK



Revised May 2018  
Saint Mary's Nursery School (SMNS)

## PARENT HANDBOOK

This publication is solely for communication of school related matters among members of the school community. Its use for any other purpose is not authorized.

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# **POLICY STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

SMNS does not practice discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or handicap in operation of the school, including such matters as admissions, educational programs or activities, employment or employee benefits.

## **PROGRAM QUALITY**

SMNS is a member of Keystone STARS Program (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources and Support) and holds a STARS 2 level of performance. Keystone STARS is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to improve, support and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

SMNS stakeholders include: Family Support Services, SE Regional Key, Philadelphia Safe and Sound, Penn Alexander School (PSD), Samuel Powel School (PSD), Independence Charter School, University City Arts League, Nonprofit Finance Fund, United Way of Southeastern PA, Child Link, Elwyn, Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, University City District, Philadelphia Reads, Spruce Hill Community Association, The Annenberg Center.

## **HISTORY**

SMNS started as a parent cooperative run by the St. Mary's Church Hamilton Village, in the early 1960's. As the nursery grew, the church hired Barbara Klein as the school's first executive director. Barbara brought to the program a strong philosophy of education that continues within the teaching practices we see modeled today. She instilled a firm belief in mixed age playing and learning, where older children have the opportunity to help and advocate for the

younger children; and the small ones are able to witness and play within a wide range of possibilities in terms of language development, motor skills, imagination and creative play.

In 1982 the nursery school became a licensed entity and in the summer of 2002 Barbara retired. At that time Andrea Mosko's oldest son had just graduated from SMNS and she was in need of a place for her daughter. Many families chose to leave when Barbara retired and, like Andrea, went in search of another place for their children, a place like SMNS. As Andrea puts it, no such place existed. "I was confident that what was happening [with my children at SMNS] when I was there, was also happening when I wasn't." SMNS was one of a kind and she, along with several other families, was determined to save it. Andrea approached the church and asked them to relinquish ownership of the school.

On August 19, 2002, SMNS became incorporated with Andrea as its new executive director. The school closed that August for two weeks and reopened in September with 19 students. The mission was to remain true to the school's educational and philosophical perspectives as created and defined by Barbara some 40 years earlier. Under Mosko's leadership, as a nonprofit, SMNS grew to 150 children.

After 15 years of service, Mosko moved on from her role. After an extensive search, in April of 2016, SMNS hired a new Executive Director, Traci Childress who comes to SMNS with a strong background in education, nonprofit management, and mindfulness arts. As Co-founder and Former Executive Director of the Children's Community School in West Philadelphia, Childress is poised to lead SMNS into the next chapter of its organizational life.

The student body has more than quadrupled since 2002 and the classrooms have had a few makeovers, but the commitment to that original mission remains and SMNS remains a "one-of-a-kind" place. Welcome!

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Saint Mary's Nursery School (SMNS) is a nursery school where children learn and practice the important principles of respect, responsibility and community. Within SMNS' supportive and nurturing environment, children explore and discover new skills and relationships. Throughout the day children take part in constructing their own learning, making choices and gaining independence.

Since the school runs as a cooperative, parents are a key component of the school and are seen as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children and within the governance of the organization.

We celebrate the work and learning that happens at SMNS amongst ourselves, as well as the broader community. SMNS fosters sound financial stewardship as it reflects the culture of the school.

This mission is realized in the following ways:

- SMNS provides childcare that cultivates imagination, curiosity, self-esteem, creativity and independence in students;
- SMNS promotes the importance of direct parent participation in the educational experience of the child;
- SMNS prepares children for kindergarten; and
- SMNS improves its community by fostering economic self-improvement in low-income and/or single parent families by providing affordable, quality daycare that will enable the parents/guardians to be gainfully employed.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN**

The educational curriculum is carefully planned to be developmentally appropriate, based on play, creativity and the arts with an emphasis on the social-emotional health and development of each child. Children are nurtured and educated in a community classroom that includes children from 18 months to five years of age, skilled teachers, parents and other involved family members. Children are part of a set group from 9 am- 3:00 pm and spend time with children in a mixed age setting before and after this time, as well as on the playground.

We are committed to the family environment and the stability and community that generations of children enjoyed before they were placed into age groups and graduated classrooms. It is our experience that all of these elements create a homelike environment that allow children to relax and open up to all aspects of learning.



# **A REGGIO EMILIA INSPIRED CURRICULUM**

SMNS is a Reggio Emilia inspired school. Our teaching philosophy is designed to meet each child's individual needs. The arts and family involvement are central to our educational program and the themes and concepts that we communicate to our students are supported and documented through their creative products. Art projects, construction projects, and theater performances, are individually catalogued, photographed and otherwise recorded to follow and document each child's development. Additionally, we align our curriculum and lesson plans to the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards.

## **FACILITY**

The classroom spaces are located on the first and second floor of the Saint Mary's Church Hamilton Village Parish Hall. There are four teaching spaces. The second floor houses classrooms three classrooms. On the first floor, we have two toddler rooms, that are set up and reset daily. This space transforms to our School Age After School program at 3pm.is

The outdoor space is located in the courtyard of Saint Mary's Church. The outdoor space is enclosed on all four sides. (Three sides are the walls of the building and the fourth side is a wrought iron fence with a gate).

The outdoor play space has play equipment for children 18 months to five years of age appropriately spaced with a safety surface that can absorb a fall from six feet high according to the ASTM standards.

# FIELD TRIPS

School trips are an important part of the SMNS experience, expanding our learning beyond the walls of our classroom. Children three years old and older will visit the Philadelphia Free Library located at 40th and Walnut Streets, the Annenberg Center for child-friendly performances and walking expeditions throughout the University of Pennsylvania campus. Families are welcome and strongly encouraged to join us on all of our trips away from the nursery school facility.

It is understood that a general permission form completed when your child begins attending SMNS allows us to travel with children to places such as the Annenberg Center for Performing Arts and the library.

Staff taking students on trips will bring: Emergency Contact Information Book, first aid kit, diaper/wipes, water and a charged cell phone. Teacher/Child ratios will be maintained or increased during trips. Volunteers and parent helpers will be used to ensure the adult/child ratio is 1 adult to 4 children or better on walking excursions. Volunteers and parent helpers may NOT be unsupervised with children during field trips.

# **CLASS GROUPS & DAILY SCHEDULES**

At SMNS we value the experience that children have in mixed age groups. We also value the learning that can take place in smaller groups with teachers who provide activities and interactions tailored to groups of children at a similar developmental stage and age in their lives. Each group has free play time, snack, lunch, centers, group meetings, and time outside. We also work hard to visit the library once a week with each group, take neighborhood walks around our building and on the surrounding campus area as well.

## **Early Arrival and After hours care**

Our Early Arrival time, and after hours care time are times when all children (excluding school age) are together.

Early arrival is 7:30 am- approximately 9 am. This is generally in the second floor classrooms. After hours programming begins between 3 and 3:30 when most groups will transition to the playground for mixed age play time.

At 9 am children enrolled in the preschool program move to their own groups. We have two toddler programs, two mixed age preschool programs, a PreK program, and an afterschool program.

## **Toddler Programs**

We have two toddler programs. Toddlers are 18 months to 23 months of age. These two programs are housed in our first floor, where we set up and break down the classrooms daily. Parents of children in the toddler programs will receive a daily report that lists what they ate, time slept and any other details.

## **Younger Mixed Age/ Preschool & Toddler**

Our younger mixed age class will range in age from 2.9-3.5 years. Children in this class follow a similar schedule to other teams. Children take home a weekly/monthly report.

## **Older Mixed Age/ Preschool**

Our younger mixed age class will range in age from 3- 4 years. Children in this class follow a similar schedule to other teams. Children take home a weekly/monthly report.

## **Pre-Kindergarten Program**

The Saint Mary's Nursery School has designed a preparatory course for kindergarten that enrolled students attend in the year prior to their kindergarten year. In Philadelphia, kindergarten enrollment is only available to children who will be five (5) years of age prior to September 1 of the year they will attend kindergarten. In our experience, this age cut off is not flexible in Philadelphia and therefore, we only allow children to enter our pre-kindergarten (Pre K) program in September, if they are four (4) years of age prior to September 1.

The goal of SMNS Pre-Kindergarten Program is to develop or further develop the academic and pre-academic skills of our children. This is achieved through a classroom experience designed to mimic and introduce the kindergarten classroom experience in content and expectation while ensuring enough flexibility to accommodate all the skill levels of its students. The pre kindergarten or "pre-k" students are separated from the larger classroom for these lessons.

In addition to the classroom experience, the pre-k students also engage in a complete theater arts program that begins with attending performances at the Annenberg Center and culminates in putting on their own productions for the school and its families.

The play productions require the children to adapt a story and characters, develop a script, create the sets and perform before a live audience of friends and family. The children perform two to three plays per academic year. Only pre-k children are involved in these live performances, though all children three years of age and older attend the Annenberg Center performances.

## **School Age After School Program**

The After School Program is open to SMNS graduates & other community members up to the fifth grade. We provide snack, homework help, art and varied activities and free play each day from 3-6pm.

The After School children are separated from the early education classrooms. Their play is significantly different and they need the time and space to work on their own cognitive, emotional and physical development.

## **School Age Transportation**

SMNS teachers pick up After School children from a limited number of local public and private schools. Arrangement for after school pick up must be made directly with the SMNS administration. Some locations require additional fees; and SMNS' capacity to pick children up at schools is dependent on staffing capacity.

## **School Age Enrollment**

Families can sign their child up for 3, 4, 5 days per week, or drop in care. All of these enrollments require the completion of the following forms:

1. Enrollment Contract
2. Emergency Contact and Consent
3. Non-discrimination in Services Disclosure Statement
4. Emergency Evacuation Plan Letter
5. Child Health and Immunization Record
6. Photo Release Forms (print and web publication) - Optional

If you are interested in enrolling your child in the After School Program, please fill out enrollment application form.

# **Summer at SMNS**

## **Preschool Summer Culture Program**

For our preschool children (18 months- 5 years), our academic school year goes through the end of June. We begin a summer exploration of culture when public schools close. June tuition is covered by the annual contract. For the months of July and August enrollment is week by week..

During the summer months we explore our home cultures and the cultures that inform them. Children get to learn about teachers' traditions, home practices, languages, and lives, as well as learn songs, games, and stories that are new. Families and children are invited to share their own home cultures too!

## **Rising Kindergartener Summer Camp**

Starting the summer of 2018, SMNS offers special programming for our rising Kindergartners starting the week after public schools are out. June tuition is covered by the annual contract. For the months of July and August enrollment is week by week. This program is similar to our school age summer camp program, allowing students to take field trips, weekly walking trips, and participate in special projects. These students also get to benefit from our summer culture program. Rising Kindergarten campers will spend some chunks of time with the school age summer camp as well, allowing them to build relationship with the older children who many of them will join in the following year at local elementary schools and for our School Age Afterschool Program

## **School Age Summer Camp**

Our School age after school program ends the Friday of the week that public schools end. School age tuition covers only these dates. Once public schools are out, SMNS offers a school age summer camp that children can enroll in weekly. In this program we playfully collaborate on group projects and creations, visit local attractions, take walks/hikes, play games and welcome visitors to our site. Some Summer activities might include Greensgrow West & Kei's Mobile Food Facts workshops, Fairmount Park hikes, Free Library of Philadelphia and of course water play activities! This camp is available for Rising first graders through rising 5th graders and is mixed age.

# IMPORTANT DATES

## Closures

Please note that this does vary depending on how the annual calendar falls. Please see our calendar to confirm exact dates.

1. INDEPENDENCE DAY
2. LABOR DAY WEEKEND – THURSDAY &/OR FRIDAY LEADING UP TO LABOR DAY AND Sometimes LABOR DAY MONDAY
3. ROSH HASHANAH
4. VETERANS' DAY – TEACHER IN-SERVICE
5. FOURTH OF JULY
6. THANKSGIVING THURSDAY & FRIDAY
7. WINTER BREAK --THE WEEK BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S DAY, including the day that New Year's is observed if it falls outside of this week.
8. MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
9. PRESIDENTS' DAY or the Friday of the annual DVAEYC conference, usually in March or April– TEACHER IN-SERVICE
10. ONE TEACHER CONFERENCE DAY PER YEAR-- often in the Spring (school is closed for regular service but open for teacher /parent conferences)
11. GOOD FRIDAY plus the Thursday that precedes it
12. MEMORIAL DAY
13. Two additional professional development days-- at the end of the public school academic year and in late August or early September

## Other Closings

The school may be closed at the discretion of the Executive Director for health and safety reasons, repairs and maintenance, and teacher trainings.

## **Weather Closures**

The nursery school will close when the Philadelphia Public Schools are closed for weather and other emergencies. In some cases the Executive Director may decide to remain open when the public schools are closed.

## **Parent Work Days**

Scheduled 3 times per year on a Saturday from 8a to 1p. The parent workday is described under the Expectations of Parents section of this book. The workdays usually occur in November, April and August; however, the workday is subject to change.

## **Annual Get Togethers**

1. SUMMER Dinner and Potluck, A Family Farer--June
2. PIZZA AND POPSICLE (Back to School Night)- September/October
3. PRE-K WINTER PLAY – Last Friday school is open in December
4. MID YEAR PLAY
5. SPRING FOR OUR SCHOOL (SFOS) FUNDRAISER April/May
6. PRE-K GRADUATION PLAY – end of school year (May/June)
7. Teacher Conference Day (we have two conferences a year, the first one if offered during regular school hours, the second is offered on a day that we close the school.



# STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

At SMNS the staff to student ratio is dependent on the age of the children in a group. In the nap room, during nap time alone, the required ratio drops to 1 teacher for every 10 students (1:10).

When children are grouped in mixed age levels, we go with the ratio required for the youngest child in the room. Below are the DHS required ratios. We aim to operate at higher ratios as often as possible.

MIXED AGE LEVEL	No. OF STAFF	No. OF CHILD
YOUNG TODDLER	1	5
OLDER TODDLER	1	6
PRESCHOOL & PRE K	1	10
OLDER TODDLER/PRESCHOOL	1	6

Volunteers, Work Study Students and Parent Helpers count towards the Teacher/Child Ratio.

## DEFINITIONS

INFANT: BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS OLD

YOUNG TODDLER: 12 TO 24 MONTHS OLD

OLDER TODDLER: 25 TO 35 MONTHS OLD

PRESCHOOL: 36 MONTHS OLD TO SIX YEARS OLD

# **SUPERVISION IN CLASSROOM**

Staff to child ratios will be maintained through staff scheduling and management. Staff shall be aware of all children in their care and be able to see all children within the group or for whom each staff person is responsible. Staff practice active supervision, which means that they plan the environment to support positive interactions; monitor children, scan and count children, listen to children, position themselves to be active participants and observers, engage and reflect on children's interactions, and participate with children.

Since SMNS allows children to flow freely between classrooms A and B, each staff person in either classroom A or B must be positioned around the classroom so that all children are supervised. In all classroom spaces the ratio of teacher to students must be maintained as described in Classroom Teacher/Child Ratios.

**CHILDREN MAY NOT EXIT THE CLASSROOM SPACES FOR ANY REASON WITHOUT A TEACHER, OR THE ADULT TO WHICH THE CHILD IS AUTHORIZED.**

**OUTSIDE PLAYGROUND /MULTIPURPOSE ROOM ("Big Room"):**

Teacher/Child Ratios continue to apply. Teachers shall position themselves to ensure that the entire outdoor play space is supervised. The entrances to the outdoor play space are to be specifically supervised.

**IN THE BATHROOM**

Teachers shall attend children while they use the bathroom. Only a teacher may attend a child in the bathroom.

# **STAFF Requirements**

SMNS uses the working title of "teacher" to refer to teaching staff in the classroom, though there are varying levels of education and experience across the teaching staff. The breakdown is as follows: aide, assistant group supervisor, group supervisor and director.

## **Background Check Requirements**

Regular staff members and all volunteers in the classroom must submit to fingerprinting, a criminal background check from the Pennsylvania State Police, Childhood Abuse Registry and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI background checks are required for staff hired after June 30, 2008).

## **CPR and First Aid Certification**

All staff members are Infant & Toddler CPR and first aid trained and certified.

## **Staff Continuing Education**

SMNS teaching staff will participate in continuing education annually. The minimum continuing education per teacher is mandated by the DPW, or in the Keystone STARS program, as long as SMNS is a participating member of the Keystone STARS program.

As of August 1, 2017, all staff at SMNS who work more than 22 hours a week (except for temporary staff) are required to have the minimum of a CDA or School Age credential or be enrolled in courses that place them on, or move them up on, the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Career Lattice.

The minimum expectation for all staff who work 22 hours or more is 6 college credits in early childhood every year until the credential is secured.

Additionally staff are expected to:

- Participate in Professional development days and possibly some workshops/conferences as available.
- Maintain all state and Keystone required annual trainings: including but not limited to CPR, Fire Safety, annual required hours (up to 16).
- Have a Pennsylvania Keys account, be responsible for it, and maintain accurate training records there, as well as supply certificates to the school upon completion of courses.

<p><b>Creation of Professional Development account</b> with the PA Keystone system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.papdregistry.org">www.papdregistry.org</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Completion of Professional Development Plan</b>, annually</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.papdregistry.org">www.papdregistry.org</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Trainings to be completed within 90 days:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New Staff Orientation</b> (online within 90 days from your start date <a href="https://od.bkc.psu.edu/user/sign_in">https://od.bkc.psu.edu/user/sign_in</a>)</li> <li>• <b>Keystone Stars Orientation 101 &amp; 102</b> (as available)</li> </ul> <p><b>Trainings to be completed within 6 months of hire &amp; as needed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PD that promotes positive interactions with children &amp; families</li> <li>• PD related to SMNS curriculum and planning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trainings to be completed within one year of hire, and every 3 years as needed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PD in planning &amp; implementation activities that support language development &amp; academic achievement of children who are culturally &amp; linguistically diverse</li> <li>• PD about social emotional learning and development of children</li> <li>• PD in use of Ages &amp; Stages developmental screening</li> <li>• PD in observation-based assessment of children’s development</li> <li>• PD related to supporting children with special needs</li> </ul>

The specific expectations listed above are subject to change in order to align to Keystone Stars and/ or DHS standards and requirements.

## **Child Abuse Reporting Policy**

All nursery school teaching staff members are mandated reporters of suspected abuse. If abuse is suspected, the Executive Director will be informed, observations will be put in writing, and the Executive Director will make a call to ChildLine.

## **ONGOING EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENT OF OUR CHILD CARE PROGRAM**

In accordance with Pennsylvania Keystone Stars requirements, SMNS develops and revises an annual Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI) plan and a Facility Training Plan (FTP). The context for the CQI and the FTP is child development, early education, special education and family supports. Influences on this process may include the Department of Public Welfare Child Development Office Regulations, Keystone STARS, granting institutions, staff and families.

# **ENROLLMENT – REQUIREMENTS\***

The following is a list of requirements that must be met in order for your child to attend the Saint Mary's Nursery School Program. All must be completed by your child's first day of attendance. Some will need to be updated annually or biannually:

1. Child Health Assessment: To be completed by the pediatrician within 30 days of the child's first day of attendance. This form must be completed on an annual basis.
2. Emergency Contact Information: This form must be updated every 6 months.
3. Tuition Agreement
4. Non-Discrimination Disclosure Statement
5. Photograph Consent Form: optional
6. Getting to know you form & meeting: (this meeting & form is given to families upon enrollment and may be updated with the emergency contact information, or when family desires).
7. Ages and Stages & Ages and Stages Emotional

\*If the required information is not provided within the time frames indicated, your child will be excluded from care.

## **EXEMPTION FROM IMMUNIZATION STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Exemption from immunization for religious beliefs, or strong personal objection equated to a religious belief, shall be documented by a written, signed and dated statement from the child's parent or guardian.

Exemption from immunization for reasons medical, need to be documented by a written, signed and dated statement from the child's health care provider. Statements shall be kept in your child's record.

# **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All child records are strictly confidential. Release of any information from a child school record (including family information) may only be done with specific authorization from the parent/guardian of the child.

Information regarding a child, or a family may only be release to a third party, if the family specifically authorizes such a release of information. Generally release of information must be made in writing. The information will only be released to the third party specifically identified in the request for information release.

# **TUITION OBLIGATION**

SMNS requires that all parents contract a place for their child for the entire academic year from September 1, through June 30.

Unless specifically excused by the Director, families are responsible for the entire tuition required under their enrollment plan even if the child does not complete the school year.

Monthly tuition rates are based on the total ten-month operational cost of the program. Tuition is billed on a monthly basis and issued through email.

Tuition is due by the fifth of every month. Please note that full tuition will be charged for the times you indicated, even if your child misses due to illness, vacations, or any other reason. The director can only make any exceptions to this rule.

# **PAYMENT OF TUITION**

Tuition may be paid by cash, check, direct deposit and all major credit cards. If you pay by credit card the addition of a 2.3% percent charge, or a \$3 fee, whichever is greater, will be

added to your invoice at the time of payment to help cover the processing fee. Online payment requires minimum \$30 payment.

## **DISCOUNTS**

You may pay tuition three months in advance to receive a 1% discount on the tuition charged.

Early/Advance Tuition Payment – All tuition accounts paid in full prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> day will receive a \$5 discount.

Parent Student Discount: We offer this discount to support families with parents enrolled in degree and/or training programs. This also includes Post Doctoral Researchers and Visiting Scholars. The monthly discount is fixed at \$45 and no financial reporting from family is required. Proof of enrollment must be provided at time of enrollment, and updated annually. It is not possible to utilize this discount at the same time that a family/individual is receiving a needs based scholarship.

Needs Based Scholarship: Families can apply for this scholarship. It is based upon the individual family's need. Applications are managed by SSSbyNAIS.org. There is a limited time to apply before each school year. Families must be up to date on all payments in order to qualify for this scholarship. Applications are reviewed anonymously by a committee that includes the representation from the Board of Directors.

Sibling discount rates: 15% for the second child enrolled full day program in the preschool. 10% for school age summer camp and all the other children except the first enrolled child.

## **LATE PAYMENT FEES**

Timely payment of tuition is critical for operation of the educational program. A Late Payment Fee/Penalty will be assessed for all uncollected tuition by the 5th of each month. The fee for late payments is \$25 per month for tuition not paid by the 5th of the month. Failure to make



timely tuition payments could result in the loss of privileges and your child may not enter the classroom until your account is current, unless specific arrangements have been made with the Director.

## **PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Families may request a parent teacher conference at anytime. The children are followed developmentally. Various child observation tools are used to record each child's growth and development. SMNS offers two teacher/parent conferences per year. The first conference is offered during regular operating hours when the school is open. The Spring conference is offered on a day when the school is closed.

At a conference, teachers will share *Learning Stories*, *Teaching Strategies* results, antidotes from the classroom, and review *Ages and Stages* with families.

### **Learning Stories**

Learning stories are snapshots of learning moments that children experience. We utilize a brief narrative format to record learning experiences as we observe them. We share these with families a few times a year.

### **Teaching Strategies**

Teaching Strategies GOLD is a system for assessing children from birth through kindergarten. Extensive field tests have shown it to be both valid and reliable. Available online and in print, the system can be used with any developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum. SMNS uses this two times a year to inform our understanding of children in our care. We share related information in our conferences.

## **Ages and Stages**

The parent-completed Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ-3™) is a family-friendly way to screen children for developmental delays between one month and 5½ years. A developmental screening is a mandated part of our annual practice to serve children in our care. Parents submit this at the time of enrollment and at least annually.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS**

SMNS practices of respect, tolerance, and appreciation of each other's differences guides our school's day-to-day relations among children and adults. We expect parents to behave appropriately and to use appropriate language in all verbal and written communications. To create a safe place for everyone, the school emphasizes peaceful, non-violent problem solving and decision-making. Physical and verbal violence will not be tolerated.

We expect parents to uphold these practices and to support the staff in their implementation. Due to the cooperative nature of SMNS School, teachers and parents work closely together as partners in the children's best interests. This long standing tradition creates a rich, vigorous and safe space in which children learn from the caring adults and kids around them each day.

## **STROLLER STORAGE**

Only Umbrella Strollers may be stored in the "Big Room". There is limited space available ONLY within the designated area. If the space is full you will need to take your stroller with you. SMNS has bike locks for sale if you wish to lock your stroller to a nearby bike rack. Please come to the office to make this purchase.

## **HAND WASHING UPON ARRIVAL**

We would like to encourage parents/guardians to wash hands with their child upon arrival to school. This is a good practice and perhaps a pleasant goodbye routine.

# CLASSROOM CONDUCT

## PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING

1. Be respectful of all persons in the nursery school environment
2. Be patient with all persons in the nursery school
3. Be gentle
4. Be willing to compromise
5. Be willing to ask for help
6. Get down on your hands and knees
7. Encourage students to use language
8. Respond to questions and be willing to engage in conversations with students
9. Show interest
10. Show approval
11. Pitch in with keeping the classrooms and hall tidy
12. Make snacks
13. Ask a teacher for help when a child needs a diaper change or to use the bathroom.\*

## PLEASE REFRAIN FROM THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIOR

1. Scolding
2. Punishment (including "Time Out") Menacing of children or adults
3. Forcing children physically, or otherwise to perform
4. Humiliation, or teasing of children or adults
5. Shouting in anger
6. Passively observing children rather than playing with children
7. Being left alone with children
8. Smoking on the school/St. Mary's Church property, or in view of children

\*For your own protection, it is best that you only take your own child to the bathroom or change her/his diaper. Please allow teachers to assist with other children.

# COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL

In order to make the SMNS experience as smooth as possible, we ask parents to keep teachers and the school office informed of any plans, problems or other matters that may affect their child's school life. The school, in turn, will do its best to make sure that parents are informed when problems or questions arise at school, which may affect students at home.

Please call or send a note to school when your child has had a major upset, when you are going to be away, when you would like to have a teacher call you to discuss a concern, etc.

Parent Mailboxes are located in the hallway by the second floor entry. Here you will find your monthly tuition bills, announcements, "Ouch Reports", and any written communication from the school.

We hope that parents feel welcome and encouraged to discuss their SMNS experience. Inevitably, questions or concerns will arise for parents about their child's experiences. The teachers need and want to know what is on your mind.

From time to time there will be situations in which parents feel disagreement with the school's actions. We encourage any person who is having a difficulty to address this difference directly with the other person. It is our expectation that such a discussion would take place at a mutually agreed upon time, and that the parties involved in the discussion would be respectful of each other's opinions, points of view and feelings.

It is our belief that, by working collaboratively with an attitude of mutual respect and a search for the best solution, we will be able to resolve any differences that may arise within our community.

# PARENT COOPERATIVE PROGRAM (COOP)

Parent Help is designed for you to be a part of your child's early education experience. Parent Help should be embraced as an opportunity to spend time with your child and become well acquainted with your child's teachers while learning about the St. Mary's Nursery School early learning and care philosophy first hand.

Respect for children is the foundation of the SMNS philosophy. Just as adults do not like to be bossed, bullied, yelled at, criticized and belittled, neither do children. It is important that you treat children, as you would like to be treated. This requires patience, but more importantly it requires that you believe that you are addressing another human being deserving of respect.

Parent Help should be a time of play with your child and your child's peers. Your child should be the focus of your parent help experience. The parent helper duties should always take a back seat to your child's needs. Never hesitate to ask for help.

## MONTHLY REQUIREMENTS FOR COOP

For the full-day enrollment tuition reduction: *Eight hours of parent help in the classroom per month is required.* Parents must schedule times to during the operating hours of the school.

For half-day enrollment tuition reduction: *Four hours of parent help in the classroom per month is required.* Parents must schedule times to during the operating hours of the school.

If bringing snack, please sign up in advance to do so on the parent help board. We also periodically have a coop project board, where parents can sign up to help with a specific project that matches expertise, such as building, repairing, sewing, teaching a specials class.

# CLEARANCES FOR ALL COOPERATIVE PARENTS & VOLUNTEERS

SMNS is required to have clearances from all parents and family members who

- do co op hours in the classroom,
- go on field trips, or
- volunteer during school hours.

SMNS is required to obtain originals of these and to keep them on file. We will keep these in our staff files which are locked and confidential.

If you are able to complete these online at home, please print out the certificates and bring them to us. If you need to use our computer, please stop by the school office.

If you have lived in PA less than 10 years, you are also required to do the FBI check. This check is started online, and then you must go to a UPS office and do fingerprints. The certificate is then mailed to you; we will need to keep the original on file.

You will receive an hour of coop time when we have all of your required certificates.

The required certifications are:

PA Criminal History - available at: <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>

- (free for volunteers)

Child Abuse Check – available at: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home> You have to set up an account and do online, or print out form here and mail in: [Child abuse form/](#)

- (free for volunteers)
- The box to check in the reason for clearance is “Employment with a significant likelihood of regular contact with children”

FBI Check: For people who have lived in PA less than 10 years: available here:

<https://uenroll.identogo.com/>

- service code 1KG6ZJ. Register and pay online and bring receipt to fingerprinting location (listed on website)

Only the FBI clearance will cost money. This \$21.35 can be applied towards your annual coop hours if you pay for it. Alternatively, SMNS can pay this fee if you do the application in the office, in exchange for an additional 1.5 hours of coop time.

Further instructions can be found here:

<http://www.dhs.pa.gov/publications/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm#.VINSnVUo6mQ>

## **STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FRAMEWORK™**

At SMNS we believe in viewing our children and families from a strength based perspective. The Strengthening Families Protective Framework™ is an international initiative that supports the development of five protective factors that should be supported in children and families in order to build strong families and to protect children from adverse experiences.<sup>12</sup>

These five factors include supporting:

- parental resilience
- social connections
- knowledge of parenting and development
- concrete supports in times of need
- the development of children's social and emotional needs<sup>3</sup>

In all of our programming and outreach initiatives we aim to support these factors. We engage in ongoing professional development for our own continued growth and understanding of these factors. We pass along community resources that support these protective factors as well.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information: <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2015/StrengtheningFamilies101.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about#protective-factors-framework>

# FUNDRAISING

Various fundraising events are scheduled throughout the year. All parents are required to participate in these efforts in some way to help raise money for the tuition and scholarship fund. Fundraising participation is required of all families (both families participating in the full fee and co-operative tuition programs)

An active fundraising committee exists which works over the course of the year planning small and large fundraising events (social gatherings and the annual auction.) Please speak with Director of Development, Gretchen Walker, or Executive Director, Traci Childress if you are interested in joining this committee. "Many hands make light work!"

# REQUIRED PARENT WORKDAYS

Work Days happen on a Saturday, three times each year and involves a variety of jobs. All families are expected to participate. Please note, failure to participate in the parent workday will result in a fee. Generally the parent workday is a thorough cleaning of the school and playground; however parents have been instrumental in all the major building and renovation projects over the schools more than fifty-year history. Specialized skills are always needed and welcome. There are many ways to leave your mark.

Parent work days are scheduled in the fall, spring and summer (one in each season). The parent workday is required of all families (both full fee and co-operative tuition programs).



# WHAT TO BRING TO SMNS

Parents will be required to provide the following items for their children on a daily basis:

1. Lunch (see section on nutrition below)
2. A change of clothing (especially bottoms)
  - Please bring even if your child is potty trained.
3. Diapers (if child wears diapers)
  - Your child will be assigned a diaper space in the diaper changing area. Please check your child's space on a daily basis. Replenish the diapers as necessary. You will also find a Diaper Changing Schedule posted above the changing table.
4. A package of diaper wipes one time per month (for diapered children)
5. Bedding – Two blankets (if your child naps)
6. During the warmer months, children will need sunscreen, a swimsuit, sturdy rubber sandals or water shoes/aqua socks and a towel. We will often have a sprinkler set up on the playground for some cool water fun. Please apply sunscreen to your child before s/he starts the day at SMNS
7. A Full water bottle every day

**LABEL EVERYTHING!**

When packing your child's lunch please be aware of potential choking hazards. The following lunch items are NOT ALLOWED in the nursery school:

- Hard candy
- Lollipops
- Soda pop
- Popcorn
- Glass Containers
- Whole grapes
- Cherries, must be pitted and cut

# NAPTIME & QUIET TIME

All children enrolled in the preschool program (18 months- 5 years old) have a naptime or a quiet time. The timing is set in each class. Parents are asked to bring bedding for children who nap.

## Suggestions for bedding

- The bedding should be something your child identifies with.
- Consider your child's favorite color, character or theme. Bottles, stuffed animals, or any other objects that help soothe are welcome.
- Please bring a box, or bag to store the bedding, separate from other children's bedding.

You will be expected to clean the bedding once a week. Please pick up your child's bedding in the nap room for washing. We do have spare bedding at the school. Should your child have occasion to use the spare bedding, you will be required to wash and return the spare bedding.

Other diapering and toileting information- Please be sure to give the staff written instructions on the diapering and treatment of rashes if your child requires special treatment during diapering.

Parent Helpers are not permitted to change diapers, or be alone with a child in the bathroom or elsewhere in the nursery.

All staff members are capable and ready to change diapers or assist in the bathroom, so please ask for assistance.

# **DROP OFF, PICK UP AND ABSENCE**

## **DROP OFF**

You must sign your child in and out everyday your child attends. You will find the sign-in book in a windowsill, halfway down the hall. This sheet is the official record of who is in the building at any given time. This sheet is the document that will be used in the event of an emergency to ensure that we have evacuated all the children from the school.

Routine failure to sign your child in and out, or routine erroneous recording of the time your child comes and goes, will result in a fine.

## **PICK UP**

When someone other than a parent, or legal guardian picks up your child, an advance phone call from a parent, or legal guardian is required. If you have not called and/or this person is NOT listed on the emergency contact form as a person to whom your child may be released, we cannot release your child.

Authorized persons will be required to show ID before the child is released. A parent may send a written note authorizing someone else to pick up his/her child. Authorization may also be given by phone.

Our late arrival policy: for pick up after 6pm a fee of \$10 for the first five minutes,. After 10 minutes, there is an additional \$50 fee plus \$2 per minute. Please understand that this allows us to protect the staff, prevent overtime, and efficiently manage our school. In the event of an emergency, please call us and inform us before 6pm so we can make necessary arrangements.

## **ABSENCE**

If your child will be absent, please call to let the school know in advance... the earlier in the day, the better.

If we are expecting your child and do not hear from you, it is incumbent upon us to contact you in order to account for your child's absence.

## **PARKING**

The parking lot of the St. Mary's Church is owned and operated by the St. Mary's Church Hamilton Village. The SMNS rents the following parking spaces in the WEST LOT (between the school and 40<sup>th</sup> Street): 1,2,3,4,9,10,12,13. Vehicles will be ticketed by campus police and towed by a tow company.

Please only park in spaces 3,4,9,10,12,13. These are outlined in blue paint. The other numbered spaces are rented out to paying customers of the St. Mary's Church, our landlord.

You may park by the painted curb for loading and unloading only. Please limit this time to 10 minutes.

We ask that you avoid parking on the space marked with an "X". This is a spot for emergency vehicle access. We are not able to use Locust Walk at all for parking. Parking on the curb, the sidewalk, or the side of that road is a violation of law. In the event of an emergency any cars parked in this space would prevent emergency workers from being able to efficiently address the emergency and make sure we are safe.

If none of these spaces are available, please call the office. We will assist you. Please be aware that when we do not adhere to these perimeters, the Penn police have authority to ticket our cars. We are actively looking into ways to make pick up and drop off easier. If you are able to walk or bike, that will help alleviate this pressure as well.

Parent Helpers and families picking up and dropping off children may use these spaces AND the painted curb.

The small parking lot along the east side of the building (EAST LOT) adjacent to the glass entrance is NOT TO BE USED by the nursery school for ANY purpose. Please DO NOT PARK in this lot, even for pick up and drop off of your children.

The pedestrian traffic along the east and south side of the school is heavy with our children and use of this lot presents a significant danger to our community, as it is a blind turn and the movement of children can be unpredictable.

In an effort to express the importance of this rule, the church will be fining the school \$10 every time we violate this rule. The school in turn, will be passing the fine onto the families that use the lot.

The fine for use of the East Lot will be \$10 per violation.

We thank you for your assistance with this safety issue.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Due to the lack of space and the need for tidiness, at the end of each month unclaimed lost-and-found items will be donated to charity. The lost-and found collection is located at the end of the hall.

# EARLY INTERVENTION

While all children grow and develop in unique ways, some children experience delays in their development. Children with developmental delays and disabilities benefit from The Pennsylvania Early Intervention program, a state supported network of parents, service practitioners, and others which builds upon the natural learning opportunities that occur within the daily routines of a child and their family.

Early Intervention:

- Provides support and services to families with children birth to age five, who have developmental delays and disabilities
- Supports services and resources for children that enhance daily opportunities for learning provided in settings where a child would be if he/she did not have a developmental delay and disability.
- Provides families' independence and competencies.
- Respects families' strengths, values and diversity.

Early Intervention supports and services are designed to meet the developmental needs of children with a disability as well as the needs of the family related to enhancing the child's development in one or more of the following areas:

- Physical development, including vision and hearing
- Cognitive development
- Communication development
- Social or emotional development
- Adaptive development

Parents who have questions about their child's development may contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288. The CONNECT Helpline assists families in locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to age 5. In addition, CONNECT can assist parents by making a direct link to their county early intervention program or local preschool early intervention program. To make a referral for early intervention, please call the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288 [www.connectpa.net](http://www.connectpa.net)

## **EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES AT SMNS**

If SMNS staff have concerns about a child's development, they will recommend an evaluation. We use observations, Behavioral data sheets, and input from parents to collect information about any behaviors or developmental concerns. With parents and providers, we develop Care Plans for children who have early intervention plans (IEP) or an Individualized family service plan (IFSP). When a child joins our community with an IEP or IFSP in place, we will request an IEP Meeting with all providers, a parent/caregiver, teacher, and Director or other school administrator. This allows us to fully understand the supports in place and how to use them in our school.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

SMNS recognizes that families undergo many life changes at home, work and school. We maintain a community notebook with materials to support a developing understanding of your child's development.

We regularly email and post flyers for local events, workshops, and community groups related to raising children, life skills, wellness, mental and physical health.

We are also available to support families to identify and engage with these services as well as to locate additional ones as needed.

# DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The number of dual language learners (DLLs) joining the U.S. educational system has recently surpassed 3 million.<sup>4</sup> Studies show that DLLs face the risk of poor educational outcomes. According to the William Penn Foundation, a minimum of 7% of kindergartens in Philadelphia are DLLs. Another quarter of children in school have one parent born in another country.<sup>5</sup> Although the majority of these children are citizens, linguistic and cultural barriers that families navigate complicate the experience of learning English while maintaining a connection to home culture and language.<sup>6</sup> Programs that utilize best practices and cultural competency, support children who are DLLs. Our preschool program equip DLL learners for school success.

Children learn by engaging in daily activities, interactions with adults and with their peers (Magder, et al, 2013). The early learning environment provides ample opportunities for these interactions. Careful attention to the needs of children learning English is critical to an early childhood learning environment.

In order to best support children who are learning English we have have a developing Dual Language Program to serve children ages 18 months to 5 years at our center. .

Our dual language program consist of four specific goals to support children:

1. To support the home language
2. To support English Language Learning
3. To support the Home culture
4. To learn from each child and family & create a bridge between home and school culture
5. To support the child to be a successful member of the school community and to be prepared for their school career and future school transitions.

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<sup>4</sup> Hammer, C. S., Jia, G., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2011). Language and Literacy Development of Dual Language Learners Growing Up in the United States: A Call for Research. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(1), 4–9. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2010.00140.x>

<sup>5</sup> Shared Prosperity Philadelphia (2015). Our citywide plan to improve school readiness: A running start Philadelphia for every child birth to 5. Philadelphia, PA: Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity. Retrieved from <http://williampennfoundation.org/sites/default/files/reports/A-Running-Start-Philadelphia-Report.pdf>;

<sup>6</sup> Shared Prosperity Philadelphia (2015). Our citywide plan to improve school readiness: A running start Philadelphia for every child birth to 5. Philadelphia, PA: Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity. Retrieved from <http://williampennfoundation.org/sites/default/files/reports/A-Running-Start-Philadelphia-Report.pdf>;



Specifically, our program integrates these components:

- Welcoming and learning from families
- Sharing our practices and understanding of DLLs with families
- Integrating best practices in DLL into our classrooms including:
  - Teacher reflections
  - Teacher planning that considers each child
  - Integration of best practices around environmental and instructional supports
- Development of a DLL Ambassador role in each classroom. This individual works as a part of the regular team but monitors team capacity to meet individual needs by engaging with:
  - Observation of classroom practices and recommendations for amendments
  - Use of tools to help ensure ongoing development of Culturally Responsive Practices in classroom and related strategies
  - When possible, the support of DLL story time
  - Training in and regular engagement with the WIDA resources for Early childhood (Development standards and essential actions)

# **TRANSITIONS AT SMNS**

## **From one program to another at SMNS**

Children enroll in a program at SMNS for an entire academic year. This means that they are in their group from September until late August. We make classroom transitions at the end of each summer. Children are prepared for this transition through careful planning on the part of classroom teachers, visits to the rooms they will move into, and the support of parents.

Classroom visits are especially important for children moving into Pre K. Our annual Back to School Night also allows parents to learn about the program their child is enrolled in at the start of the year.

Summer programming looks different than programming from September- June, and may involve more mixed age activities some days. Rising Kindergarteners participate in a Rising Kindergarten camp over the summer months that also helps to prepare children for our School Age Program by incorporating outings, field trips, and some time with the School Age Summer Camp children as well.

## **From SMNS to another school**

In the event that a family decides to leave SMNS, SMNS can support this transition by completing required paperwork such as a summary of the child's records, completion of a teacher evaluation. All fiscal terms in the contract will be relevant to such transitions and their timing. If a child leaves the school during the school year, teachers will work with the family to plan an exit/transition strategy.

## **From SMNS to Kindergarten**

The transition from Preschool to Kindergarten is a pivotal milestone in Early Childhood Education. This time may present a number of challenges for a young child and all of those directly involved in this experience. There are actions that the school, teachers and families

can do to make the transition to kindergarten a positive experience for the young child and their family.

In order to best support our students that will transition from Preschool to Kindergarten we have crafted a Kindergarten Transition Document that provides an overview of practices that we ascribe to at Saint Mary's Nursery School and, a kindergarten readiness resource packet with kindergarten transition preparation activities for families, teachers and administrators.

At Saint Mary's Nursery School we encourage our families to begin connecting with their child's school prospects, in the spring before your child starts kindergarten. Most schools have "kindergarten roundup/registration" events so families can learn about the kindergarten program. Plan to attend school information nights and open houses. You may wish to visit and observe possible schools and classrooms to see if the school is a good fit for your child. If you look at a school in the spring, remember that the children you observe are at the end of their school year, and their skills will be more advanced than those of a child just beginning kindergarten.

The following information is for families that are looking into the Philadelphia Public School District. Kindergarten Registration historically begins in late January of the year your child will enter Kindergarten. We anticipate the registration date for children entering Kindergarten in September to be in January of that year. You may register only at your [catchment](#) school beginning on the announced date. To determine your household catchment, you may go to the following website: [https://webapps.philasd.org/school\\_finder/](https://webapps.philasd.org/school_finder/). It is important to note that enrollment procedures may vary from school to school. Many districts assign children to a kindergarten in a specific school based on geographic location.

A list of local public schools near Saint Mary's Nursery School are listed below:

Penn Alexander,  
4209 Spruce Street

Henry C Lea Elementary School,  
4700 Locust Street

Samuel Powel,  
301 North 36th Street

Albert Greenfield,  
2200 Chestnut Street

The following information is for families that are looking into Philadelphia Charter Schools. Charter schools enrollment is specific to each school. Admission is done by lottery system and each school conducts its own lottery. Below, we have listed charter schools that some SMNS graduates have applied and or attended. The following information is for families that are looking into Philadelphia Charter Schools.

Russell Byers,  
1911 Arch Street  
Independence Charter,  
1600 Lombard Street

Folk Arts Cultural Treasures,  
1023 Callowhill Street  
Wissahickon Charter School,  
4700 Wissahickon Avenue

Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School,  
2600 South Broad Street

Christopher Columbus Charter School,  
1242 South 13th Street

Independence Charter School,  
1600 Lombard Street

Please visit The Philadelphia School District Website for more information: [www.philasd.org](http://www.philasd.org). We will also make school registration for Kindergarten information available to families through parent meetings, and at parent-teacher conferences.

# **NUTRITION, FOOD, & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

We believe that good childcare depends upon consistent caregiving in a home-like atmosphere. Children grow and learn best in a safe environment that provides opportunities to explore, create and communicate with other children and adults. These groups function independently but cooperatively, following routines appropriate to individual needs. The program is designed to be inclusive of all children, including those with identified disabilities and special learning and developmental needs. The Center's program is designed to include both planned and spontaneous activities in response to children's interests. Experiences with music, movement, art, language and building are incorporated into daily plans. Regularly scheduled snacks and meals, rest time, indoor and outdoor play, and routines in physical caregiving promotes the child's health, comfort and ability to care for his/herself.

## **Food**

All children bring their own lunch. We provide two snacks each day.

## **Lunches**

SMNS encourages families to pack lunches for children that include nutrient-dense foods to prevent hunger, foster healthy growth and help maintain healthy weight. We encourage children to learn to self feed to support lifelong healthy habits. We encourage families to send children to school with a bottle for water that is full. We provide water in small cups throughout the day.

## **Sharing Lunches**

Children may not share food at SMNS, in order to keep all children safe.

## **Suggestions for lunches**

As we have limited space to refrigerate food, please send lunches in an insulated lunch box/bag with ice packs. As we are unable to heat food, an unbreakable thermos is recommended for hot/warm foods and liquids. Please do not send food or drinks in glass

containers. To encourage sound nutrition, we ask that parents send lunches that are well balanced. This includes grains/breads, protein and/or dairy, and fruits and/or vegetables. Some popular and nutritious ideas for lunches include: Sandwiches such as cream cheese and jelly, tuna, egg salad, and chicken salad, made with a variety of breads such as loaf bread, bagels, tortilla wraps, pita, etc. Pasta, Pizza, Soups, Salads and More Soups, pastas in sauce, stews, casseroles, green, pasta or rice salad, pizza, meats, cheeses, beans, tofu, cut-up fruits and vegetables, Hot/warm foods must be in a THERMOS, which does not require additional heating.

Cold foods and beverages must be sent with ice packs to ensure proper cool storage in lunch box. Some popular and nutritious ideas for snacks in lunches include crackers and fruit, cheese, hummus, yogurt, raisins, or applesauce. Fruits, Vegetables and Other Ideas: Bananas, raw carrot or celery sticks, par boiled vegetables, peaches or pears with cottage cheese, yogurt. To promote healthy eating habits, teachers encourage children to eat what has been sent for their snacks and lunch; with this in mind, we ask that parents send a variety of healthy options as described above.

## **Important Details about food**

No soda or high sugar drinks.

Parents should alert their child's teacher to any food allergies or sensitivities. Please note that SMNS is not a peanut-free or nut-free environment; please note that foods children bring from home and consume at the Center may contain nuts and nut products. For this reason, we do offer a nut free eating table.

Staff will allow children to eat the foods they have in the order they choose; we cannot withhold food or not permit children to eat some foods until they have eaten others; with this in mind, please send foods that you wish your child to eat and staff will encourage the enjoyment of all foods they have been provided for snacks and lunch. Children's interest in and enthusiasm for food is actually quite similar to that of adults; when food is prepared and presented to highlight a variety of colors and textures, it's often that much more appealing to eat and enjoy.

## **Breast Milk**

Breast Milk is welcome and must be in a sanitary BPA free bottle. It must be labelled with the child's full name, date and time the milk was expressed as well as a use by date. They must be brought in containers appropriate for a single feeding. SMNS will warm milk using warm water.

## **Snacks at SMNS**

SMNS provides fresh fruits and vegetables several times a week. We supplement these with crackers, hummus, dried fruits. We also integrate special snacks such as smoothies, quesadillas and other simple items. Children are encouraged to try foods they are unfamiliar with.

# **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY at SMNS**

Physical activity (PA) is important for children's health and development and excessive sedentary behaviors are associated with poor health outcomes. At SMNS we integrate movement and music weekly. We spend time on the playground every day unless the weather prevents it.

## **Outside**

Because we go outside everyday, PLEASE dress your child accordingly. We recommend winter coats, hats, boots & gloves for winter, and summer hats for summer. As a licensed child care facility through the Department of Public Welfare, Commonwealth of PA, we abide by law, 3270.114, "Weather permitting, children shall be taken outdoors daily."

The American Academy of Pediatrics has published findings that children incur less illness when they are allotted time to play outside in the fresh air. Keystone Stars has issued the following PA Position Statement based on the AAP's findings. "Children are expected to go outside when the forecast temperature/wind chill are above 25 degrees, the forecast

temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees and there is no current air quality alert. It is understood that given these parameters there may be portions of some days that do not meet the conditions of weather permitting since forecasts are generally targeted to a point in time in the day.”

You may verify this information through the following sources.

- American Academy of Pediatrics (800) 433-9016
- Department of Public Welfare (800) 222-2117

## **BIRTHDAYS**

We invite caregivers to join their child’s class on their birthday for meeting time. We invite you to join in a classroom activity that you arrange with your child’s teaching team, to come read a book, or to share an activity. We will do a class wide birthday song at the end of each month to recognize birthdays. As of May 10, 2018, SMNS does not serve sweets for birthdays and asks that caregivers refrain from bringing them into the school for their children’s birthdays. We want to honor birthdays without all the sugar.



# **MEDICATION Prescription and Over the Counter**

The nursery school staff will administer medication provided your child is well enough to attend school. Antibiotics, asthma medication, allergy medication and diaper rash medication are common medications administered by the nursery school staff.

Medication must be signed in on the medication log located near the daily sign in sheet. Please be sure to hand the medication directly to a staff member and give the staff member instruction for administration and storage of the medication. A copy of the medication log form will be given to you.

Staff may only administer medication in accordance with the label directions and may not use it if it is past its expiration date. The instructions from you, the parent, cannot conflict with the label directions.

The medication must be signed in everyday administration is required.

Childcare centers are not allowed to keep antibiotic ointments "on hand" in case of minor injuries, nor are they allowed to have a parent/legal guardian sign a Medication Log form on a one time basis that would cover anytime that same over the counter medication needed to be used on that child.

## **ILLNESS**

Fever-A child may not come to the nursery school with a fever. Please do not bring your child to school if you have medicated your child to reduce a fever prior to the start of school. It is important that your child get appropriate rest when ill and that you consider the staff and the other children and families you may be exposing to illness. Fever reducers have no ability to reduce the potential for your child to pass disease to others.

If your child develops a fever while at school, once the temperature reaches 101°F your child will be sent home. Your child will not be allowed to return for 24 hours. If your child is sent home after lunch, your child may not return the following day.

Rash- if your child develops a rash other than a diaper rash, your child will be sent home and your child may not return without a doctor's note stating that your child is healthy. There is no time requirement for absence due to a rash. Your child may return to school as soon as the doctor provides instruction that your child may do so.

Diarrhea- Diarrhea will be treated in the exact same manner as rashes.

Vomiting – Vomiting will be treated in the exact same manner as rashes and diarrhea.

## **MINOR INJURIES & FIRST AID INFORMATION**

Staff members are trained in first aid and in pediatric CPR. They will administer first aid when necessary. You will receive information about any injuries your child sustains while at school. You will be given a description of the event, care given, and your child's reaction to the event and care, a.k.a. "Ouch Report." A copy of this report will remain with the school as well. If the injury is the result of an altercation, you will be given all of the above information, but you will not be given the name of the other child. Under no circumstances will your child be discussed with other parents, nor will a child other than your own be discussed with you.

Minor Injuries include: abrasions, bites (human and insect), cuts, nosebleeds, splinters, etc. If such an incident occurs, the affected area will be cleaned as thoroughly as possible with a mild soap and warm water and covered either with a dressing or bandage, ice pack, etc.

Insect Bites: We will watch for signs of a severe allergic reaction and call 911 if necessary. If the child has been prescribed an EpiPen for insect bites, then we will administer it immediately while another staff member contacts 911.

Human Bites: If the bite causes a puncture or cut that completely breaks the skin, especially if it draws blood, we will notify you and ask that you consult with your pediatrician. Your doctor will need to decide whether your child needs a vaccine (tetanus or hepatitis B) and will assess the risk of infection.

Cuts: These are defined as lacerations to the skin that can spread apart. Some may require medical attention. We will let you know if you should consult with your pediatrician when the wound contains dirt or debris that cannot be removed with cleaning, if the cut might need stitches or if the child's tetanus shot is not up-to-date.

Splinters: We will cover the wound with an adhesive strip but will not try to dig or cut the splinter out.

Nosebleeds: In general, nosebleeds are common in children and do not pose a serious risk. We will seek medical attention for any nosebleed that does not stop bleeding after 15-20 minutes of direct pressure.

## **SERIOUS ILLNESS OR INJURIES**

If a child were to experience an illness, or injury that would require paramedics or transport to hospital, 911 would be called immediately. All teachers have access to a cell phone, at all times, while working with your children, this includes field trips and other transportation to and from the school. If such an incident were to occur, you would be notified immediately.

The school will notify the DPW Child Development Office by the next working day at 215-560-2708. An "Incident Report Form" will be filled out and a written report will be submitted within 24 hours of the occurrence. A copy of the "Incident Report Form" will remain in your child's file as well as within the school's Incident Report File.

# OVERVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

SMNS has an Emergency Plan instructing responses to a variety of emergencies ranging from the relatively common (weather related) to more serious events (fires, release of hazardous materials, or a natural disaster). We hope this information serves to assure you that we have made a plan of response to all types of emergencies. A detail of the following plan is posted in the main hallway of the school.

Depending on the circumstances of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- Immediate or Local Evacuation: Students are evacuated to the UPenn LGBT House in the event of a fire. This is the building located directly across the driveway that runs south of our building.
- Shelter-In-Place: In certain circumstances, e.g. severe weather or a release of hazardous materials, taking cover inside of the building is the best immediate response.
- Evacuation: Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the immediate area. In this case, children will be taken to the Parent Infant Center at 4205 Spruce Street, Philadelphia PA 19104.
- Modified Operation: In the event of a winter storm, or other severe weather phenomenon, facilities problems or other conditions that make regular operation unsafe for children and staff, will be cause for cancellation, postponement or rescheduling of our normal activities.
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We ask that you NOT call during an emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information. We will contact you to let you know that we've taken these protective actions.

In the Event of an Evacuation: A notice will be posted on the outside entrances to our building instructing you as to where the children have been evacuated. Efforts to contact the parents directly will be made as soon as the evacuation is complete.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, a drill of an emergency evacuation, a field trip or any departure of the students from SMNS as a matter of the nursery school operations, the staff accompanying the departing students will take the following items:

Emergency Contact Information Book, First Aid Kit, Diaper/Wipes, Water and a Charged cell Phone.

## **Practice Drills and Training**

SMNS will perform monthly emergency evacuation drills with an emphasis on the Immediate or Local Evacuation scenarios listed above. The Shelter-In-Place scenario listed will be done in place of one of the regular Immediate or Local Evacuation drills annually.

The staff will receive training from an emergency evacuation professional annually on the SMNS specific Emergency Evacuation Plan. The staff will also receive training from the director in the intervening period as needed and in the event of a change to the plan.

Children will be trained on emergency evacuation procedures during our monthly drills. All child related trainings will occur in a developmentally appropriate manner.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SMNS is a 501.c.3 nonprofit organization, and as such has a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors at SMNS is a volunteer board of SMNS parents and non-parent community members that is charged with the oversight of the school's budget and policy matters. The Board faithfully stewards SMNS resources to ensure the ongoing success of the SMNS mission and program, now and well into the future.

Each spring SMNS parents and non-parent community members nominate themselves and others creating a slate of nominees. A vote is held and SMNS families elect new and returning board members. We encourage parents and members of the community who feel they or someone they know can bring a particular skill set and perspective to the school to consider running for the Board.

Directors serve a two-year term and meet bi-monthly, with committee meetings taking place on alternating months. There is an annual board retreat and each member is expected to participate in school wide events. Fundraising is a very important part of serving on the SMNS Board. Board members must participate in fundraising efforts as well as make an annual contribution (no dollar amount is stipulated).

Every Board Member agrees to the fundamental legal duties of serving on a Board of Directors:

Duty of Care— Each board member has a legal responsibility to participate actively in making decisions on behalf of the organization and to exercise his or her best judgment while doing so.

Duty of Loyalty — Each board member must put the interests of the organization before their personal and professional interests when acting on behalf of the organization in a decision-making capacity. The organization's needs come first.

Duty of Obedience — Board members bear the legal responsibility of ensuring that the organization complies with the applicable federal, state, and local laws and adheres to its mission.

Other responsibilities include supporting and evaluating the Executive Director, supporting and advocating for the mission of SMNS, ensuring adequate and sound financial resources, protecting those resources with financial oversight, ensuring the legal and ethical integrity of

SMNS, and being and advocate and spokesperson for the school. Each Board Member is expected to sit on at least one committee. Current committees include Development, Facilities, Governance, Human Resources, Finance, Outreach and Technology.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MISSION STATEMENT**

SMNS is a 501.c.3 nonprofit organization, and as such has a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors at SMNS is a volunteer board charged with the oversight of the school's budget and policy matters. The Board faithfully stewards SMNS resources to ensure the ongoing success of the SMNS mission and program, now and well into the future.

# POLICIES FOR EXCLUDING CHILDREN

Children must be excluded for the following reasons

1. Child Health Assessment is not current.
2. Immunizations are not current
3. Emergency Contact information is not up to date.
4. Tuition Agreement is not in place.
5. Non-Discrimination Disclosure Statement is not signed.

Common Illnesses that Require Exclusion from school

6. Fever- child may not come to school with a fever. If child develops a fever of greater than 101° F while at school, the child will be sent home.
7. Strep Infection- child must be excluded and may not return without a note from a health care professional verifying the child is no longer contagious.
8. Vomiting- child must be excluded and may not return without a note from a health care professional verifying the child is no longer vomiting and is not contagious.
9. Persistent Diarrhea- child must be excluded and may not return without a note from a health care professional verifying the child is no longer suffering from this condition and is not contagious.
10. Lice- child must be excluded and may not return without a note from a health care professional verifying the child is no longer contagious, or verification through examination from the nursery school staff that there is no longer an obvious threat of transmission to other children, families, and staff.

The above list is simply the most common reasons for exclusion.



Other reasons for exclusion include

1. Delinquency in tuition payment.
2. Habitual late pick up (after 6:00pm)
3. Inability to adhere to the nursery school policies as outlined in this handbook and in the Tuition Agreement.
4. Habitually not following parking rules and requirements or habitually parking in illegal locations.
5. Please see section of this handbook, entitled "Guidance and Discipline Policy (Inclusion & Expulsion)"

The Saint Mary's Nursery School is not limited to the above list of exclusion criteria.

Children demonstrating any of the above exclusion symptoms should NOT be brought to school. If your child develops any of these symptoms while at school, the staff will make every effort to isolate your child from the other children and you will be notified immediately. Your child will need to remain out of school until the symptoms that suggest contagion or interfere with your child's ability to participate resolve.

Please visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health website and search "Communicable Diseases Fact Sheet" for more information concerning symptoms and treatment of these and other common illnesses.

# GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE POLICY

Saint Mary Nursery School's guidance and discipline policy is based on the belief that as young children experience trust and respect they build skills that are essential to lifelong social and emotional skills. We believe that all behaviors express a need and work to understand children's needs. It is our aim to support children to move toward age appropriate self-discipline and peer interactions.

We recognize that children learn social emotional and group skills at their own pace, and that conflicts arise as part of learning. Our goals are to help children develop social and emotional skills, self-esteem, manage feelings and impulses, build positive peer relationships, and strengthen communication and problem-solving capacities.

We aim to:

- Establish clear, simple, and consistent rules
- Model behavior and peer interactions for children
- Assist children in speaking with one another and in working through conflicts
- Understand what behaviors are communicating and scaffold learning accordingly

Techniques will vary, depending on the situation, the child, and the needs of the group. We aim to support children in the day to day work of playing together as well as in building skills that will allow them to be successful community members. Most children develop appropriate and necessary skills to deal with ongoing interpersonal situations with support and practice. We aim to support children to see themselves as successful community members who can navigate social interactions. We bring a child centered lens to our support, as we believe that the approach to each situation needs to meet the specific needs at hand.

When a child has ongoing difficulty in managing his/her behavior, even with the support and redirection of teachers, we engage families with teachers, directors, and possibly consultants. Meetings empower us to develop strategies in partnership. Every realistic effort will be made to help the child overcome challenges that interfere with his/her ability to effectively participate in the group setting. We reserve the right to determine the appropriateness of the classroom environment for each child. Under all circumstances, family input will be an essential component of this process. If inappropriate behavior persists, staff may recommend alternative programs for a child.

# NAEYC CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

“The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research.”<sup>7</sup> As the national professional agency in our field, NAEYC’s policies and ethical codes of conduct guide our work with children, families and with one another. Below is the pledge of ethical conduct that we ask our community members to adhere to in their actions.

## Pledge of Ethical Conduct & Statement of Commitment<sup>8</sup>:

As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of my ability, I will:

1. Never harm children
2. Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
3. Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
4. Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
5. Serve as an advocate for children, their families and their teachers in community and society.
6. Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
7. Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
8. Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.

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<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/about-us> May 21, 2018

<sup>8</sup> This Statement of Commitment is not part of the PA state Code but is a personal acknowledgement of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming part of the profession.

9. Continue to learn, grow and contribute as a professional. Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.