

# Family Handbook



— EPISCOPAL —  
**Children's  
Services**  
BELIEVE. ACHIEVE. SOAR.

## WELCOME TO ECS



It is a pleasure to welcome you to Episcopal Children's Services. I am delighted you have chosen ECS for your child's care and early education. For over 50 years, we have provided quality child care for children in Northeast Florida and have been nationally recognized as a leader in high quality early childhood education programs. Through our many programs, we work with children, parents, and the community to give children opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.

Choosing an early learning program for care and education of children is the single most important decision you make for children when you work outside of the home. We want you to feel at ease and confident that your child is loved, learning, and happy.

Please take the time to read through this handbook to learn more about our programs and policies and procedures. Our goal is to support you in your role as a parent and hope you will become an active participant in our school activities. If you have any questions, or concerns, feel free to talk to the teachers or the learning center director. We want the best for our children and are excited you have chosen ECS as your family of care.

Sincerely,  
Connie Stophel, CEO

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# About Us

## 1.1 Our Mission

Our mission is to create opportunities for all children to achieve their full potential. Our motto is Believe. Achieve. Soar.

## 1.3 Our Philosophy

We believe

- Parents are the first and primary educators of their children.
- The potential for learning is greatest during the early years of a child's life and every possible learning opportunity should be provided to children at the earliest possible age.
- Nurturing, stimulating, safe and fun-filled environments that are print-rich, orderly, and sanitary provide optimal learning.
- Children are individuals who deserve an environment that supports and promotes respect, trust, fairness and diversity.
- Learning experiences should provide a balance of child-focused and teacher-facilitated learning experiences that support children's continuous physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth and development.

## 1.4 Open Door Policy

The learning center maintains an open-door policy with all parents of enrolled children. Parents will have immediate access without prior notice to the learning center.

## 1.5 Hours of Operation

**Early Learning Center at Good Shepherd**, located at 1100 Stockton Street, is open Monday-Friday **6:30 am - 6:00 pm**.

# TUITION AND PAYMENT

## 2.1 Tuition

**Weekly tuition is due on Friday of each week for the upcoming week.** Fees are based on a reserved classroom slot and not on actual time that a child spends at the learning center. Credit or a reduction in rates is not provided for child absences, holidays, emergency closings, teacher training days, or child vacation days. Current tuition rates are posted on the parent information board.

Continuity of care is an important part of early learning. When children form strong relationships with their teachers, they feel safe and secure and optimal learning can take place. For this reason, most children will transition to the next classroom during the summer months and tuition rates will remain the same throughout the school year, even if a child has a birthday.

## 2.2 Late Payment

**A late fee of \$50 will be charged per family on Monday for unpaid tuition.** If tuition remains unpaid by Tuesday at close of business, attendance on Wednesday will not be permitted and child care services will be terminated until payments are made in full.

If child care services are terminated due to non-payment, the learning center reserves the right to submit information to a collection agency and/or the State Attorney's Office for legal assistance.

As soon as families are aware of any extenuating circumstances, the director should be notified, as she may be able to provide you with resources for financial assistance.

## 2.3 Multiple Child Discounts

A 10% discount is given per family with more than one child enrolling in our school. For children with vouchers, the discount will be applied to the remaining balance. At time of enrollment, the parent must complete a request for Multiple Child Discount Form. The discount is applied to the oldest child enrolling.

## 2.4 Annual Registration Fees

A non-refundable registration fee is payable at the time of enrollment. Registration fees are not refundable under any circumstances, as these fees hold open a slot for the child. To guarantee a child's enrollment for fall each year, the registration fee is due annually on September 1st. Paying on time will avoid late penalties.

## 2.5 Payment Options

Cash is not accepted. The following forms of payment are accepted:

- **Automated Payments through Tuition Express.** A Tuition Express form is required. **NOTE:** There is an additional fee of **\$4.00** per transaction for credit card payments made through Tuition Express. There is no additional fee for check payments made through Tuition Express. A declined card will result in a **\$40** fee.
- **Online Bill Payer through a Financial Institution.** Payment may be set up to the learning center as a bill through a bank or credit union. Payment should be made using the name of the learning center and address. The account number will be the first and last names of the child or children. The learning center will not charge an additional fee for this method of payment if the payment is made by the due date. Because it may take up to 10 days for the payment to reach our bank, payments must be scheduled in advance to avoid any late fee penalties. A declined payment will result in a **\$40** fee.
- **Checks.** Funds must be drawn on a local bank and the date on the check must be the same date the check is written. Postdated checks will not be accepted. In the event a check is refused for payment or returned, there will be a Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) fee assessed in the amount of **\$40**. Once a check is returned for NSF, checks will no longer be accepted as a form of payment and child care will be suspended until all fees are paid in full.
- **Money Orders.** A dated receipt will be given.

## **2.6 Late Pick Up Fees**

A late fee of **\$25.00** for each quarter hour will be assessed for children who are not picked up by closing time.

**For learning centers closed at 6:00 pm**, a fee of \$1.00 per minute is charged per family until 6:14 pm. At 6:15 pm the fee is \$25.00 for each quarter hour thereafter. The late fee must be paid in order for the child to return to school. Services may be terminated if late pick-up is frequent.

If a child is not picked up 1 hour after closing time and every attempt to reach an authorized adult has failed, the learning center will be forced to contact the sheriff's office to report child abandonment.

## **2.7 Holidays and Emergency Closings**

The learning center will close for scheduled holidays and teacher training days. Tuition does not change for weeks that include planned or emergency school closings. A school calendar that includes planned closings will be posted on the Parent Bulletin Board and included in the enrollment package.



## **2.8 Attendance**

Because tuition reserves a child's spot in our program, full payment is required each week whether the child is present or not.

## **2.9 Vacation**

Families enrolled full time for at least 12 months of care are eligible for a one-week vacation during the calendar year. A one-week vacation is defined as five consecutive school days, Monday – Friday. A one-week vacation will be charged at one half the tuition rate. A two-week notice must be submitted prior to the vacation time. Children enrolled in part time care or children that are dis-enrolled during the summer months are not eligible for vacation credit. Vacation leave cannot be used during the period of the 2-week withdrawal notice.

# **ATTENDANCE**

## **3.1 Absences**

Parents should notify the learning center within one hour of normal arrival time if a child will not be in attendance that day. This notification will assist in more effectively maintaining appropriate child staff ratios and will serve as a preventive safety measure to ensure all children's whereabouts are known.

## **3.2 Illnesses**

Parents are requested to notify the learning center if a child has an illness or communicable disease. Notice of viral illness or communicable disease will be posted. Confidentiality of children's names will be observed.

Teachers conduct health checks on each child upon arrival to the classroom. A child may not be accepted into the learning center if staff deem the child too ill to attend or contagious.

## **3.3 Arrival**

Children must be escorted into the program in the morning and from the program at the end of the day by an adult listed on the authorization form for pick up.

Parents should leave cell phones in vehicles so that children have full attention during this transition period.

**Parents are required to sign children into the classroom on the Parent Sign in Sheet.** Parents are required to walk the child into the classroom and ensure teachers are aware of the child's presence before exiting the learning center.

To help decrease the spread of viruses, parents should assist children in hand washing upon arrival in the classroom.

Rather than sneaking away, parents should help children become engaged in the ongoing activities in the classroom. This may require planning a few extra minutes each morning, but will greatly benefit children's transition into the classroom.

### **3.4 Dismissal**

**Parents or authorized adults are required to sign children out of the learning center on the Parent Sign In/Out Sheet located in the child's classroom.**

The parent or authorized adult is responsible for supervision of the child once the child has been signed out of the learning center and must walk the child to the car.

Parents should leave cell phones in vehicles so that children have full attention during this transition period.

Parents are requested to handle any center business (payment, conferences with director, etc.) prior to checking the child out of the learning center.

### **3.5 Authorized Persons for Pick Up or Emergencies**

Only authorized persons listed on the Authorized Persons for Pick Up form are permitted to have access to children and to remove children from the learning center. The following procedures apply:

- It is the responsibility of the registering parent to notify the learning center in writing of all persons authorized to pick up the child from the learning center.
- Parents are required to complete the Authorized Persons for Pick up and Emergency form at time of enrollment.
- Only persons listed on this form will be permitted to remove the child from the learning center.
- Persons on the authorized list, but unfamiliar to the staff will be required to show proof of identification with a picture I.D.
- Changes/updates to the list must be made on the original DCF form located in the office.
- Individuals must be at least 18 years of age in order to sign a child in or out of the learning center.
- In an emergency, the learning center will contact the parents first. If the center is unable to reach the parents, the staff will call the persons on the listed form until someone is reached.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that an authorized person is available to pick up the child on time.

If a parent or authorized adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs the staff will attempt to contact the other parent or authorized adult on the pick-up list. The learning center staff do not have the right to deny parents access to children, but the staff will contact the police immediately if the learning center is not able to contact the other parent or authorized adult to pick up child.

### **3.6 Keyless Entry**

The keyless entry system is used to keep the building secure and to ensure only appropriate individuals have access to the facility. A four-digit code will be assigned to each family. Press # after entering the four-digit code. If separate codes are needed for each parent, a request should be made to the center director. The code should not be shared. People listed on the child's emergency contact list and who have permission to pick up the child should wait to be greeted by staff. The code should never be shared with unknown individuals. When entering the building, parents should ensure the door is closed completely behind them. Unknown individuals should not be allowed to enter the building with or behind parents.

### **3.7 Divorce and Custodial Rights**

Some families have shared parental responsibilities. In situations where there is a custody or domestic issue, the following will apply:

- The learning center must be provided with the most recent certified copy of the court order and any amendments to the order, i.e. custody order, restraining order, or protection order from abuse.
- The learning center will follow the orders of the court.
- Deviations from the court order will only be made if there are written instructions from the custodial parent/s (joint custody will require both parent signatures).
- If there is not a copy of a court order or a copy has not been provided to the learning center, both parents will have equal access to the child.
- By law the learning center may not deny parents access to children without a court order.
- In the event of verbal or physical conflict concerning custody, police will be called.

### **3.8 Cell Phone Use**

Parents should refrain from using cell phones during arrival and pick up times so that full attention is given to children during the transition from home to school and from school to home.

### **3.9 Special Requests**

Parents are requested to notify the teacher or director if there are any special needs or instructions for the child's day. Special requests should be

submitted in writing and may include but are not limited to health issues, family situations, alternative pick up person, early pick up time, or any other issues the learning center should be aware of to best meet the individual needs of the child.

### **3.10 Termination/Withdrawal**

Two (2) weeks written notice is required from parents that are withdrawing children from the learning center. Parents are responsible for tuition and fees for two (2) weeks if proper notification is not provided. Any past due balances are due on the last day of enrollment. Balances remaining after 30 days will be referred to the learning center's collection agency.

In the event that a child is absent for one week, without proper notification to the office or payment, the child will be considered withdrawn from the program and the reserved classroom space will be filled. All tuition and any related charges are due and payable. To re-enroll, normal registration fees will apply. The child will only be considered for re-enrollment upon space availability. If a child is selected for re-enrollment, parents will be required to complete an entire new Enrollment Agreement at the current rate and pay a new non-refundable Registration Fee at the current rate. If there was an outstanding balance (including tuition or fees) when the child was withdrawn, the account must be made current prior to completing a re-enrollment application. All fees (Tuition, Registration or Activity) are non-refundable.

The learning center reserves the right to terminate child care services at any time, with or without cause. Child care services may be terminated for willful destruction of property, if the child poses a threat to the safety and welfare of other children in care, physical or verbal abuse by the parent upon the learning center staff, insufficient funds that are not repaid promptly, and refusal to follow center policies.

### **3.11 VPK Attendance Policy**

The following attendance policies will be in effect during the days in which VPK is operational. The VPK Schedule will be posted on the Parent Information Board.

#### **Please note the following policies:**

- VPK operates from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and 2 p.m. until 5 p.m daily depending on enrolled class. Children must be present in the classroom and signed in by start time and not signed out before ending time to be counted as present.
- Continued tardiness interrupts children's learning opportunities and teachers' planned activities and may be cause of termination from the VPK program.
- Children enrolled in wrap-around care, may be dropped off any time after opening hours and picked up any time before closing hours as long

as children are present between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

- Daily attendance is necessary for optimal learning; however, VPK children are allowed (3) absences per month. Any absences beyond the allowed three require dated and signed documentation from the parent or a professional service provider for one of the following reasons: illness, injury, death in family, compliance with court order, observance of a religious holiday or service, or special education or related services for the child's disability.
- Absences of 5 or more consecutive instructional days will be considered a **withdrawal** from the VPK program. Withdrawals from the VPK program will not be eligible for re-enrollment. One **documented** 5-day absence during the 180-day instructional period is permitted. Documentation must be submitted in advance, explaining the reason for the 5-day absence, and be dated and signed by the child's legal custodial adult.
- Parents should notify the center within one hour of normal arrival time if a child's is expected to be absent.
- The VPK program ends at 12:00 p.m. (5:00 p.m.) daily. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for every additional minute that the child is still in attendance after 12:05 p.m. ( or 5:05 p.m.)
- At the end of each month, parents should review and confirm children's recorded attendance with the teacher. Parent's monthly signature on this form will verifies attendance and also direct the Early Learning Coalition of Duval to forward payment for that month's VPK program to the learning center.

### **3.12 American Disabilities Act**

Children with disabilities will not be excluded from attending our program or any extra-curricular activities.

### **3.13 Non-Discrimination Policy**

The learning center does not discriminate against children or parents because of race, color, gender, religion, age, disability, national origin or any other characteristic protected by law.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

### **4.1 Communication**

Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with teachers at drop-off and pick-up times, sharing information that will help teachers understand children's unique strengths and needs to better adapt the program to meet those needs.

Teachers of children in Infants, Ones, and Twos classrooms will use Daily Notes to record diapering and feeding information for families.

Center managers will regularly share photos, class information, and event details through posted fliers, the Remind app, and/or Facebook.

#### **4.2 Volunteers**

The learning center has an Open Door policy with all family members of enrolled children. Families are welcome to join us in our programs. Participation supports and enriches children's learning experiences.

All visitors are required to sign in before proceeding to the classroom.

The Behavior Management Policy, Standards of Conduct, and Visitor Policies will apply to all volunteers at all times.

Due to state licensing regulations, siblings of children in the program may not attend when a parent/family is volunteering in the classroom.

There are several ways family members can volunteer at the learning center, including but not limited to the following:

- Sharing information about a profession, hobby, culture
- Chaperoning on field trips
- Donating items
- Reading stories
- Preparing materials
- Providing routine maintenance
- Enhancing the playground and facilities
- Supporting teachers
- Organizing activities and events

Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age and must be under constant supervision of a trained staff. A Level II Background Screening is required for all volunteers who have contact with children for 10 hours or more per month. Volunteers who do not meet the requirements listed on the DCF Attestation of Good Moral Character will not be allowed to continue volunteer services with the learning center.

#### **4.3 At Home Activities**

Although "homework" is not assigned for preschoolers, teachers do send home suggested activities to enhance the learning taking place in the classroom.

Talking to children builds language skills. Families can use time in the car or the walk to and from school to prompt children's thought processes by asking questions and extending on their responses.

Reading and discussing books with children each day is one of the most effective ways to prepare them for school. Rich language experiences and critical thinking are critical components of school readiness.

Children also need background experiences as a foundation for connecting new knowledge. Families can take advantage of the natural resources in the area, free museum days, and local libraries to give children exposure to new places and ideas.

#### **4.4 Family-Teacher Conferences**

Each child will have a portfolio which includes a sampling of the child's progress. Depending on the age of the child, these samples may include art work, dictation, writing samples, photos, screenings, formal assessments, and observation notes. At least two times per school year during scheduled parent conferences, parents and teachers will meet to review children's progress and needs and set goals for the child. Other conferences may be scheduled as needed or as requested by parent or teacher.

#### **4.5 Parent Input**

The center manager has an Open Door policy and welcomes families to share questions, concerns, and ideas.

At least once per school year, parents will be asked to complete anonymous surveys as a means of informing the early learning staff on the center's strengths, challenges, and possible solutions.

#### **4.6 Parent/Guardian Roles and Responsibilities**

We believe that parents have rights and responsibilities concerning the education and care of their children. We believe parents' concerns are reasonable and important.

##### **Rights**

Regarding a healthy learning environment, parents have the right to know

- children will be safe at school, both physically and emotionally
- children will be treated fairly, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability and that each child will be treated as an individual
- staff is experienced and trained in child development
- negative or cruel behavior among students or between students and staff will not be tolerated

Regarding clear, courteous communication, parents have the right to

- be treated with courtesy by all members of the staff
- participate in meaningful parent-teacher conferences to discuss children's school progress and welfare
- visit the learning environment
- approach a staff member with a concern and know the staff member will listen carefully and will do everything possible to address the issue

Regarding information on school policies, parents have the right to

- information on academic requirements of the school program
- inspect their child's record and respond to any statement
- be informed of and to appeal school policies
- be informed of and to appeal administrative decisions

### **Responsibilities**

Parents have a critical role in the care and education of their children and are expected to

- be involved in children's education and learning
- communicate with teachers about children's progress
- set goals with the teacher and share in decisions about children's care
- share information about the child and home that may affect behavior
- discuss concerns with the teacher first
- be knowledgeable about center policies and procedures.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **5.1 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**

All staff are required by law to report any suspected case of child abuse. The learning center adheres to this law and has the responsibility for the prevention, identification, and reporting of child abuse and neglect (sexual, physical, emotional). Under Florida Law, cases of possible child abuse and neglect are reported immediately to the Department of Children and Families. The abuse hotline is **1-800-96-ABUSE**.

### **5.2 Confidentiality of Records**

All records of children and families are confidential. Parents have the right to review their own children's records and respond to any statements located within the records. As a condition of enrollment, parents give consent to early learning staff to access child records. All child records are subject to inspection by state governing authorities.

### **5.3 Trauma-Informed Care**

In the event the learning center is made aware of circumstances in a child's life that may have caused trauma to the child, our first priority will be to maximize the child's sense of safety through continuity of care, support and



understanding of the child's emotions, and relationship building with teachers and children. Individualized plans and goals will be made in collaboration with the child's primary caregiver, the child's teacher, and the center manager to ensure the child's unique educational and social-emotional needs are being met.

#### **5.4 Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather**

If the threat of a natural disaster, such as hurricane, tornado, or flooding is imminent, the learning center will follow the Duval Public School System for closure guidance. In the event of a weather emergency on non-public school days, the center will follow the guidance of the city of Jacksonville. Once threat of danger passes, the center director will assess the learning center for damage and re-open as soon as possible. Notification will be given on our Facebook page. No tuition credit is given when the learning center is closed due to the threat or occurrence of natural disaster.

The following steps must be confirmed before re-opening the learning center:

- The learning center must have power and any physical damage must be repaired.
- There must be available staff in the learning center to provide appropriate and required staff to child ratio.

The Remind app and Facebook will also be used to communicate closings and openings.

#### **5.5 Child Health Services**

It is required by the Department of Children and Families to have on file for each child a Physical and an Immunization Record. **Parents have thirty (30) days after enrollment to bring in the original forms: Physical Examination – Form 3040 and Immunization – Form 680.** After that time, a child cannot attend the learning center until the forms are submitted. A child who has not received the age-appropriate immunizations prior to enrollment and who does not have documented medical, religious, or philosophical exemptions from routine childhood immunizations must provide documentation of a scheduled appointment or arrangement to receive immunizations. If a child is enrolled without documentation of enrollment and is within the 30 days, the early learning center is required to provide written notification to inform other parents that some children in care may not have current immunizations.

#### **5.6 Child Health Emergencies**

In the case of accidents, incidents, and health concerns, staff will make every attempt to contact parents/legal guardians first and then will contact the authorized persons listed on the child's enrollment forms. It is the

responsibility of family to notify the learning center of changes in phone numbers or emergency contact names.

Children with special health needs or who are at an increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, or emotional conditions and require additional services must have an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP), which will be located in the child's file and a current copy must be readily accessible to caregivers.

Staff caring for a child with an IHCP must be trained to recognize and respond appropriately to a medical emergency and must have access to the child's medication and instructions in the event of a health emergency.

When transporting children with chronic medical conditions), their IHCP and supplies or medication must be available in the vehicle or with early learning staff on the field trip. The responsible adult in the vehicle or on the field trip must be trained to recognize and respond appropriately to a medical emergency.

### **5.7 Accidents**

Accident insurance is provided at no additional cost to parents. This policy covers children while on our premises or while being transported in one of our vehicles.

The learning center will take all pre-cautions to insure the safety of children while under our care. However, in the event that a child is hurt at our center, the following procedures will be followed:

- An incident/accident report will be filled out by the child's teacher. Depending on the type of injury, the parent may be called.
- The parent will be asked to review the accident form and provide a signature. If someone other than the parent picks up the child, the designated pick-up person will be asked to sign the report. A copy will be given to the parent/designated pick-up person upon request.
- In the event the injury requires medical attention, instructions and support will be provided to assist the parent in filling out a Child Insurance Claim Form. Parents should obtain copies of all insurance forms before submitting them. The family will be responsible for paying the \$25.00 deductible.

### **5.8 Daily Health Checks**

Daily health checks are conducted on each child upon their arrival. Families should share with the teacher any pertinent information that might impact children's care for the day. If children show visible signs of illness or a communicable disease, teaching staff will isolate the child and immediately contact the family to pick up the child. The learning center will notify

parents of any outbreaks in the classroom by posting a notice on the classroom door.

**Families will be asked to immediately pick up children if the following signs, symptoms, or conditions are present:**

- Fever, sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100<sup>o</sup> F or higher taken under the arm or 101<sup>o</sup> F taken orally. Any infant under 2 months of age with fever should see a physician immediately.
- Diarrhea - runny, watery, or bloody stools
- Vomiting - two or more times, vomiting that contains blood, or vomiting followed by severe cramping
- Severe coughing - child gets red or blue in the face or makes a high pitched whooping sound after coughing
- Eye discharge - thick mucus or puss draining from the eye or pink eye
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Ear discharge
- Untreated infected skin patch(es)
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool and yellowish skin or eyes
- Head Lice (including nits)
- Extreme irritability, continuous crying, or requiring more attention than staff can provide without jeopardizing the health and safety of the other children
- Any other unusual signs, symptoms, or conditions

**5.9 Conditions of Short Term Exclusion**

A child will be placed on short-term exclusion, which may include non-admittance, when the illness and/or injury is contagious and/or poses a significant health and/or safety risk to other children and staff.

**5.10 Re-Admission after Illness**

Children will be allowed to return to the learning center when all symptoms have ceased. Depending upon the condition, children may not be allowed to return to the learning center without a physician's authorization. Conditions that commonly require a note from a physician or health department detailing when a child may return, which may include, but not be limited to, chickenpox, Hand Foot & Mouth, strep throat, scabies, impetigo, meningitis, head lice, or Hepatitis A.

**5.11 Lice**

A child identified as having head lice shall not be permitted to return for 24 hours and only with validation that treatment has occurred. All nits must have been removed. Verification of treatment may include a product box or empty bottle.

## 5.12 Medication

The safest practice for children is to limit the transfer of medication to and from the learning center and to limit the number of people involved in medicine administration. Therefore, parents should make every attempt to dispense medication at home by creating a schedule that allows parents to dispense medicine prior to arrival at the learning center, immediately upon pick-up from the learning center, and/or before bedtime. Parents should notify staff if children are taking medicine at home so that staff are alerted to be mindful of side effects.

In the event a schedule for at-home medicine administration is not feasible, all medication administered by the learning center staff must be authorized by the parent on an **Administration of Medicine form**. Parents written instructions must include the following:

- child's first and last name
- medication name
- dosage
- time and date to be given

Only medicine that has been prescribed by a doctor and is in the original container and has not expired may be given at the learning center.

Staff will not administer the initial dosage of a medication, except with physician's written permission for life-threatening situations, such as an EpiPen.

Prescription medication must have a label with the following information:

- the name and contact information of the physician
- child's first and last name
- name of the medication
- medication directions, including time and date to be administered

All prescription and non-prescription medication must be dispensed according to written directions on the prescription label or printed manufacturer's label and maintained at the appropriate temperature.

If non-prescription medication is to be given, a note from the physician, stating the name of the medication and the dosage instructions, must be attached. Prescription and non-prescription medications that are used on an "as needed" basis require the parent/ legal guardian to provide additional documentation on the authorization form to describe symptoms that would require the medication to be given.

Staff will inform parents immediately of any noticed side effects or changes in behavior.

Medication will be stored in a locked secure area inaccessible to children.  
**NO MEDICATION MAY BE PLACED IN THE CHILD'S CUBBY/BOOKBAG OR LEFT UNATTENDED IN THE CLASSROOM.**

### **5.13 Biting**

When a child bites another child, it can be very distressing to children and parents. Toddlers sometimes act assertively as they grow and learn to be more independent. Rarely is this behavior an intention to harm another person.

#### **Why do toddlers bite? There are several factors:**

- The child's language may not be developed and biting is one way for the child to express his wants or needs.
- Toddlers have very little impulse control. When they are angry or want something, biting is often their first impulse.
- Biting may feel good to sore gums when children are teething.
- If a toddler is overly excited or has been playing in a rough-and-tumble manner, biting sometimes happens because of the excitement.
- If a toddler is tired, not feeling well, or during a troubled situation at home, biting is sometimes a way for the toddler to tell us he or she is unhappy.

#### **What will our teachers do about biting? Our staff will**

- Separate the two children who are having the conflict.
- Give attention first to the child who was bitten.
- Wash the bite with soap and water and apply ice if needed.
- Redirect the calmed and cared for bitten child to another activity.
- Remind the biter to use gentle touches before redirecting this child to another activity.
- Document the incident on an accident report form which the center manager will sign prior to the parent signing.
- Notify the parents of both children without disclosing the name of the biter.
- Shadow a child who is a chronic biter to attempt to break the habit by anticipating biting situations before they happen.

#### **What will our teachers NOT do about biting? Our staff will NOT**

- Tell a child to bite or hit back.
- Use vinegar or any other substance on the biter's mouth.
- Talk to the biter about biting, as the emphasis on the word "bite" can result in more biting.
- Reveal the name of the biter to other parents.

#### **What can parents do to help?**

Parents often feel helpless when their child is biting others or being bitten by a friend. Parents should be assured this is a stage that will eventually pass.

### **Parents can help by**

- Talking about using gentle touches, rather than talking about biting.
- Refrain from rough-housing or wrestling with the child during the biting stage.
- Refrain from kissing games or blowing on the child's belly during the biting stage.
- Refrain from biting back.
- Keep the routine at home consistent and steady. Avoid excitement or late bedtimes.

If biting continues to be a problem, the center manager will request a parent conference and will work with the parents and teacher to create a plan to help the child learn a more appropriate way to express himself.

In severe cases of biting, for the protection of the other children in the classroom, it may be necessary to suspend the biter from the program until the biting stops. This action requires approval from the VP of Center Operations.

### **5.14 Dress Code**

Children should arrive at school dressed in comfortable, weather appropriate, and easy to launder clothing. Teaching staff will make every effort to protect clothing; however, children can experience accidental spills during planned activities. All clothing items should be labeled with child's first and last name.

For the safety of the children, children should wear sneakers or rubber soled shoes to prevent injury during indoor or outdoor play. Open-toed shoes, sandals, and flip flops are not permitted. Parents should remove any cords or strings from shoes or jackets that may become entangled in playground equipment.

For children under the age of three, hair accessories should not be used due to the risk of choking.

For infants, ones, and twos, 2 extra sets of seasonal clothes should be stored in a sealed and labeled bag in the child's cubby. For preschool children, 1 extra set of seasonal clothes should be stored in a sealed and labeled bag in the child's cubby.

Children who are potty training, should have at least four (4) extra sets of clothing each day.

### **5.15 Meals**

A nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are provided for all children. The learning center follows USDA and state nutritional guidelines for the foods served. Because some children have food allergies and dietary restrictions, no outside food items should be brought into the classroom except during special classroom events, at which time restricted foods will be announced with the donation requests.

To eliminate food-borne illnesses, all staff and children must wash hands before and after preparing, touching, or eating meals and snacks.

### **5.16 Candy**

Candy items should not be brought to school for distribution. Parents are asked to help children find more creative ways to generosity while also promoting the value of sound nutrition.

For special classroom events, all food brought into the learning center must be store bought and sealed in its original container. Parents should first ask the classroom teacher about specific food allergies and dietary restrictions in the classroom.

### **5.17 Dietary Restrictions and Allergies**

Special dietary needs and food allergies should be noted in writing at the time of enrollment and discussed with the center director and classroom teacher. In the case of a severe allergic reaction while in the learning centers care, parents will be notified immediately and, if necessary, professional medical assistance will be sought. Modest accommodations will be made for children with food allergies or those who require specific menu items.

### **5.18 Special Events**

Celebrating special events are an important part of learning. A sign-up sheet or notice concerning celebrations will be posted on each classroom door.

To adhere to state nutrition guidelines, no home-made foods are allowed. All foods brought on site must be commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.

Due to the number of children with nut allergies, the learning center is a nut-free facility. Therefore, **no nut** products are allowed.

Birthday celebrations are scheduled after 3:00 p.m. following nap time. Parents should coordinate with children's teachers so that adjustments can be made to the afternoon snack. For safety reasons, balloons are not permitted.

## 5.19 Behavior Management

**Policy:** Effective management of children's behavior is based on positive guidance strategies with the goal of self-managed children. The management technique to be used in any particular situation will be based upon consideration of the particular situation and the individual child. All staff, substitutes, resource agency staff, volunteers, and parents should follow these positive guidance methods:

### Procedures

Behavior management should be viewed as an on-going process for helping children develop competence, self-control, and appropriate behavior. The early learning center uses the following principles to guide children:

1. **Know the developmental characteristics for the age of the child.** Oftentimes what teachers think is a discipline problem is actually age-appropriate behavior. Be realistic about expectations for children.
2. **Plan ahead to prevent behavior problems.** Anticipate problems that may occur and provide intervention or directions in advance. For example, limit the number of children in centers. Have activities prepared so children do not have to wait.
2. **Establish clear and simple rules that are age-appropriate.** Consistent reminders help reinforce limits. Rules should be stated in a positive way. For example, if a child is running, say, "Please use your walking feet. Running feet are for outside," rather than, "Don't run!"
3. **Be a model for the desired behavior.** Treat all children with respect and politeness. For example, if a teacher has a leaky paint container in her hand and needs to get to the sink, she will ask the children who are in line at the sink, "May I please use the sink out of turn?" She will then remember to thank them for helping her.
3. **Validate children's emotions.** Before redirecting behavior, let children know you understand how they are feeling. "I know you are upset because you wanted to play with that. It's his turn right now."
4. **Help children learn problem-solving skills.** Give them the language they need to communicate feelings and needs to others appropriately. Work with them to come up with solutions to conflicts. For example, "You are not happy. You wanted to play with that truck. Can you ask your friend to give you a turn when he is finished?"
5. **Give hugs and support.** Establish a nurturing relationship with each child to let them know they are accepted and loved no matter how they behave.
6. **Reinforce positive behavior.** Focus on the specific desired behavior. For example, "Jessie, you have worked incredibly hard to put all the blocks neatly on the shelf. Fantastic job!"
7. **Overlook small annoyances.** Reinforce positive behaviors by giving them attention. Unless the behavior is aggressive and someone is in danger of getting hurt, let the children work out the problem on their own.



8. **Empower children by giving them choices and responsibility.** If a child's behavior is unacceptable, suggest alternative choices. For example, if a child is throwing blocks, say, "Blocks are for building. Would you like to help me set up the bean bag toss so that you can throw bean bags or would you like to stay in blocks and build structures?"
9. **Re-direct or divert the child.** Substitute an appropriate activity for the unacceptable one. Some behaviors that are inappropriate are temporary or situation specific. In these cases, alter the environment by redirecting the child to another activity. For example, if two children who are good friends have begun to get irritated with one another, intervene before things get out of hand by engaging them in a new activity.
10. **Help children see behavioral consequences.** Since young children are self-centered, it is hard for them to see beyond their own needs. Help them to move from thinking only of themselves, to thinking of others by analyzing the consequences of their actions. Discuss their behavior in a non-judgmental way and encourage them to think about its impact on people, objects, and events.
11. **Provide renewal time.** When a child is too upset to talk or listen, it may be necessary to remove the child from the situation for a period of no more than 2 minutes. Because time out is not allowed, caregivers must stay with the child during this time to discuss what happened and to help the child regain composure.
12. **Call for assistance from center director.** In the event a child is creating an unsafe situation for himself or others, call immediately for assistance.
13. **Implement Behavior Intervention Policy when necessary.**

### **Prohibited Consequences**

Center staff, parents, substitutes, volunteers, and resource agency staff will refrain from all of the following and will immediately notify management of any violations of these policies:

- o **Time out.** Time out is not developmentally appropriate and will not be used. There will not be any identified space or chair reserved for time out. Children will not be isolated indefinitely due to behavior problems. Children will not be isolated in an unsupervised area. Cribs will not be used for placement of time out.
- o **Physical contact.** The use of physical force or rough handling with children is prohibited. This includes pulling or lifting by the arm/leg/clothing, grabbing by the arm/shoulders/neck/clothing, forcing or restricting any type of movement, hitting, pushing, shoving, spanking, shaking, slapping, twisting, squeezing, jerking, biting, grabbing, binding, covering of the head or mouth, or any other negative physical contact.
- o **Threatening.** Children will not be threatened with physical punishment, with isolation, with denial of outdoor time, or with a phone call to parents.
- o **Ridiculing, Ignoring or Degrading.** There will be no name-calling, belittling, or comparison to other children. Children will not be ignored as

a form of punishment. Toilet training will not include any punishing, demeaning, or humiliating. There will be no abusive, profane, or sarcastic language or verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks in front of the child or about the child or child's family.

- **Withholding or requiring of meals, snacks, or water.** Children will not be denied food, water or any other basic need as a means of discipline. Children will not be compelled to eat or required to have soap, food, spices, or foreign substances in the mouth.
- **Excessive Requirements.** Children will not be subjected to demanding excessive physical exercise, excessive rest, or strenuous or bizarre postures.
- **Denying rest.** Children will not be denied rest as a means of discipline.
- **Denying outdoor play.** Children will not be denied outdoor play time as a means of discipline and will not be required to stand or sit and watch others play.
- **Denying field trips.** Children will not be denied field trips or other activities as a means of discipline

### **Behavior Intervention**

In the event a child exhibits persistent challenging behavior, such as hitting, kicking, throwing objects as a display of aggression, spitting, cursing, or verbal harassment, teaching staff will use all resources available to implement positive discipline strategies within the classroom to decrease the unwanted behavior. If safety is a concern, the center manager will be called into the room for assistance. If the challenging behavior is an ongoing occurrence, parents will be asked to work with the center manager and lead teacher to create a Behavior Intervention Plan with the goal of finding successful strategies for changing the behavior.

A behavior Intervention plan will include the following:

- A description of the desired behavior.
- An indication of the strategies previously implemented.
- A description of the strategies to be tried.
- Regular, ongoing (at least weekly) written description of the outcome of tried strategies.
- Teacher, center manager, and parent signatures.

### **Expulsion**

If a plan is implemented and unsuccessful in changing desired behaviors and there are safety concerns for the child, other children, or staff, the learning center reserves the right to dis-enroll a child.

### **Confidentiality**

When behavior issues impact more than one child, staff must adhere to confidentiality requirements when communicating with parents. Names of

other children and specific information about challenges are not to be shared.

### **5.20 Standards of Conduct of Parents, Volunteers, and Visitors**

To promote a safe learning environment, the learning center has guidelines of acceptable conduct for all parents, volunteers, and visitors. These guidelines must be followed while on the premises or while attending an learning center-sponsored event.

- Respect and promote the unique identity of each child, family, and staff member. Refrain from stereotyping on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or disability.
- Follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members.
- Supervise children at all times. Children will not be left alone or unsupervised while in the learning center or under the learning center's care.
- Use only positive methods of child guidance. Verbal humiliation, corporal punishment, or any other physical force, such as pulling children by the arm, is prohibited. Methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as a punishment or reward, time out or the denial of basic needs are prohibited.
- Refrain from smoking on the premises and during all center or parent activities. The learning center adheres to a *Smoke Free Environment*. This includes the use of e-cigarettes and vaping.
- Refrain from illegal activities while on the premises or in attendance at center activities. The learning center prohibits theft, firearms, alcohol, explosives and illegal substances on the premises and during all center or parent activities.
- Refrain from harassment. Any cause of disharmony of any kind will not be tolerated. Use only positive language and behaviors with children, center staff, volunteers, and other parents.

### **5.21 Visitors**

All volunteers and visitors shall sign in at the designated area for check-in and obtain permission for the visitation and a visitor's pass.

Visitation by a non-enrolled child unaccompanied by his/her parent(s) or legal guardian is prohibited unless prior approval has been granted by the learning center director.

Only persons with legal authority to do so, such as the Department of Children & Families personnel or law enforcement, shall be allowed to question a child on the property without the consent of the child's parents or legal guardian.

Because staff, children, and families have the right to a safe and non-hostile work and learning environment, all visitors to the property shall comply with all policies while on the property and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is not disruptive, threatening or abusive.

- Any parent, volunteer or visitor who is disruptive, threatening or abusive will be asked to relocate to a location in the facility where children are not present and where the matter can be discussed and resolved in a professional manner.
- If the person refuses to relocate or continues to act in an inappropriate manner, the person will be asked to leave the premises. If the person refuses to leave, staff will notify appropriate law enforcement personnel. Should the person subsequently return to the property and again act in a manner that is disruptive, threatening or abusive or if the initial incident is so extreme that the teachers are concerned about the person returning to the facility, the person shall be informed in writing that he/she is prohibited from returning to the property.
- Any person who believes that he/she has been wrongfully prohibited from returning to the property, must first leave the property as requested, but may subsequently appeal the decision in writing to the learning center director.
- A final decision will be made and the person will be notified in writing that he/she may not return to the property except under expressed conditions.
- Notwithstanding the above, center personnel shall always have the authority to notify appropriate law enforcement personnel should any person to property violate criminal statutes.

**This policy shall be posted in a place clearly visible to all.**

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

### 6.1 Curriculum

**Foundations for Success for Infants and Toddlers** is the curriculum used for infants, toddlers, and two-year olds. **Links to Early Learning** is the curriculum for the three-year-old and VPK classrooms. Both curricula are on the Florida Office of Early Learning approved curriculum list for school readiness children.

**Foundations for Success for Infants and Toddlers** focuses on four foundational areas necessary for supporting infant and toddler development. Relationships are central to the curriculum, as forming strong relationships affects other areas of development. The other three foundations are Senses and Perceptions, Movement, and Language. Research continuously demonstrates the crucial nature of experiences

during the early years when children's brains are building the connections used to form their development. Providing opportunities for children to build these connections is vital. Teachers support children's development by planning experiences in each area to maximize individual potential.

**Links to Early Learning** was written and developed by Episcopal Children's Services. It is a research-based, comprehensive curriculum designed to provide a strong foundation for early learning and development in preschool children through rich and varied learning experiences. The goal of the curriculum is to expose children to activities in a play based setting that is closely aligned to the school readiness goals and standards of the state. Every lesson is designed to achieve specific learning objectives correlated to the standards.

Provided within the curriculum are strategies, ideas, and activities that encourage children to explore and enjoy learning. The curriculum addresses all areas of development for preschool children and provides individualization strategies for providing more support as needed, meeting the needs of dual language learners, and expanding the concepts for children needing a challenge.

## **6.2 Child Screening and Assessment**

Screening is a process to identify any developmental concerns that may require further evaluation and follow-up. Screenings conducted at the center may include vision, hearing, speech/language, nutrition, dental, and overall development. The *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* will be used twice per year. Parental consent to these screenings is obtained through signature at the time of enrollment

Parents will be informed of results of screenings at the scheduled parent-teacher conference twice per year. At these times parents will be given the opportunity to meet with teachers to discuss growth and development. Teachers will share with parents the results of screenings and assessments and the goals for each child. Parent conferences will be documented on a parent conference form and signed by the parent. These forms will be kept in the child's portfolio. At home activities may be recommended based on the results of the screenings. If further evaluation or services are needed, parents will be referred to the appropriate agencies or to their personal pediatricians. Additional screenings and parent conferences will be utilized as a means of follow-up on screenings that result in referrals to outside agencies.

Children at every age level will be assessed using an on-going portfolio assessment system for the purpose of identifying developmentally appropriate learning outcomes met throughout the year and creating individualized learning goals based on the results of the assessments.

Each child will have a portfolio which includes a sampling of the child's progress. Depending on the age of the child, these samples may include *Ages and Stages Questionnaires*, Florida-required VPK assessments, other informal assessments (colors, shapes, etc), artwork, dictation, writing samples, pictures, observational notes, photos, etc. Portfolios for infants and toddlers may also include copies of daily notes and growth charts. Portfolios will be shared with parents during scheduled parent conferences. At the time of a child's transition to the next class, the teacher will pass the portfolio up to the next teacher. At the time of a child's transition to kindergarten, the teacher will send the portfolio home.

Teaching staff will use a variety of strategies and individualized lessons and experiences to promote and support children's learning and developmental progress based on children's documented needs. Progress of goals will be documented and shared with parents at the parent-teacher conference.

### **Ages & Stages Questionnaire Procedure**

- The *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* (ASQ) will be used twice per year for all age groups, except VPK students, who will typically have only one ASQ along with the state-mandated VPK assessment.
- The first ASQ will be administered within 45 days of the start of the school year or the child's enrollment.
- Teachers will complete and score the ASQ. Parental input may also be used to complete the ASQ. The scored ASQ will be kept in the child's portfolio.
- As a safeguard to protect against misidentification, the ASQ screening booklet will include the child's first and last name and date of birth.
- Parents will be informed in writing of results of screenings either through a letter sent home by the center director or through written documentation of a parent-teacher conference where results were shared.
- At home activities will be recommended based on the results of the screenings.
- If further evaluation or services are needed, parents will be referred to the appropriate agencies or to their personal pediatricians.
- Additional screenings, individualized planning, and parent conferences will be utilized as a means of follow-up on screenings that result in referrals to outside agencies.

### **VPK Assessment**

Children attending a Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program will have a state-mandated VPK assessment during the fall and spring months, and as an optional period, during the winter months. The VPK Assessment was developed by The Florida Center for Reading Research in collaboration

with the Florida Department of Education. The purpose of this assessment is to provide teachers with valid and reliable feedback regarding children's progress in attaining school readiness skills as stated in the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year Olds (2011)

The VPK Assessment includes progress monitoring measures in the areas of:

- Print Knowledge
- Phonological Awareness
- Mathematics
- Oral Language and vocabulary

Dates for VPK Assessment Periods

- Assessment Period 1 - the month of September\*
- Assessment Period 2 - the month of January\*\*
- Assessment Period 3 - the month of April/May (end of program year)\*

\* required by the Department of Early Learning

\*\*required by Guiding Stars of Duval Quality Rating Improvement System

For more information about VPK assessment, please visit the Florida Department of Education's website:  
<http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/assessments.asp>

### **Classroom Assessment**

The CLASS™ Observation Tool (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) gauges the quality of teacher interactions that boost children's learning. Data from CLASS™ observations helps teachers to focus on effective teaching and recognize and understand the power of interactions with children. Research has shown that students in classrooms with higher CLASS™ scores achieve at higher levels than their peers in classrooms with lower CLASS™ scores. To learn more about the CLASS™ Observation Tool visit: <http://www.teachstone.org/about-the-class/>

### **6.3 Backpacks and Diaper Bags**

Because backpacks and diaper bags require storage space and are accessible to children, parents are asked to keep these in their vehicles after transporting items to and from the classroom. The learning center will provide a small bag for each child that can be left in the classroom in the mornings and taken home at the end of the day. In the event the bag is lost or damaged, the parent will need to replace the bag with a clear acrylic bag with a handle to hang on a hook

### **6.4 Nap and Rest Time**

Our infants nap according to their individual schedules, and all other ages have scheduled rest times after lunch. Parents can view the daily schedules posted in each classroom to determine the specific times. Nap cots will be covered with a cot sheet. Children should bring a favorite blanket from

home labeled with first and last name. Scheduled rest times are not appropriate times for dropping off children, as this is very disruptive for the other children in the classroom.

### **6.5 Outside Play**

Outside play experiences are an important extension of children's classroom learning and are scheduled each day. All children will go outside unless it is raining. Children should be appropriately dressed for the weather and should bring a coat and hat during colder days. Because of staffing considerations, a physician's note is required for any child that is unable to go outside.

### **6.6 Field Trips**

Field trips are used to enhance the children's learning opportunity. They are a great way to extend the curriculum and provide children with hands-on experiences. Teachers have specific goals and objectives when planning a field trip. Parents will be provided at least two weeks' notice for each upcoming field trip. Each child must have a signed field trip permission slip.

### **6.7 Toys from Home**

To prevent special toys from being lost or broken, toys should not be sent to school with children. On certain days throughout the year, children will be allowed to bring personal items and/or toys to share during a special part of the day's activities.

### **6.8 Television**

The learning center prohibits the use of television.

### **6.9 Transitions**

Continuity of care is an important part of early learning. When children form strong relationships with their teachers, they feel safe and secure and optimal learning can take place. For this reason, most children will transition to the next classroom during the summer months. However, when it becomes necessary during the year to move a child up to the next class, teaching staff will strive to make as smooth a transition as possible for the child, the parents, and the teachers. Parents will be informed both verbally and in writing. The child will transition slowly over the course of a few days.