

St. John's Lutheran Church
Early Childhood Center
Policy Handbook

St. John's Lutheran Church
Early Childhood Center
1 Van Roo Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

Phone:(516) 378-4ECC (4322)
E-Mail: ecc@stjohnsmerrick.org
Website: stjohmsmerrick.org

January 2024

Our Philosophy

At St. John's Early Childhood Center, we strive to create a strong partnership between parents, teachers, administrators and pastoral staff in order to enrich the total development of each child. St. John's Early Childhood Center was established in 1999 as a ministry of the Church.

Our Goals

First and always, we want your child to have a wonderful preschool experience as they begin their educational journey. Our goals for your child while they are with us include:

- Providing a positive beginning so that your child feels secure in a school setting.
- Guiding each child's development in social, emotional, physical, spiritual and creative areas to stimulate their natural curiosity and growth.
- Sharing the word of God in a way that each child can relate to God, His Son and His Word.

Early Childhood Center Administration

The Early Childhood Center has been serving the community since 1999 and is a ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church. The Director administers the Early Childhood Center. All teachers, teacher aides and administrative support report to the Director. The Pastor oversees the Director. All hiring decisions are brought by the Director to the Early Childhood Center Committee and are ultimately approved by the Church Council of St. John's Lutheran Church.

Our Programs

- **Two-Year Old Program**
The Two-Year Old Program is designed to be a first introduction to school and an opportunity to socialize and separate from their parents. Children quickly learn to follow a school routine, and all learning is done through age-appropriate play. Classes are small and led by two Co-Teachers. Programs are offered two, three or five days per week starting with 2 hours from September through December and increasing to 2.5 hours from January through June.
- **Three-Year Old Program**
The Three-Year Old Program is also designed as a first introduction to school and focuses on socialization and an introduction to core learning concepts. Children learn through developmentally appropriate hands-on

instruction and play. The Three-year old children attend four or five days per week. Each session is 3 hours.

Admission Information

All children are considered for admission based on their age and developmental readiness on an individual basis. A child is admitted if the programing offered can meet a child's needs. St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, or national origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies and other school-administered programs.

Tuition and Fees

St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center operates solely on the revenues generated through registration and tuition fees.

Registration Fee

This non-refundable fee is payable when submitting an application form. Applications not accompanied by a registration fee are not considered official.

Annual Tuition

Annual tuition fees are published on the school website (ecc@stjohnsmerrick.org). Tuition is an annual fee that is divided into ten payments. Tuition payment #1 is due July 1st. If registration takes place after this date, tuition payment #1 is due at the same time as the registration fee. Your child is not guaranteed a spot in our program until Tuition payment #1 is received.

Tuition payments are collected via electronic payment on the 1st or 15th. If you withdraw your child during the school year, all Tuition payments due through and including the first day of the month of withdrawal must be paid.

Refunds

If you withdraw your child during the school year, all Tuition payments due through and including the first day of the month of withdrawal must be paid.

- 1.) No refunds are given for absenteeism unless it is for an extended time and is approved by the Director.
- 2.) No refunds are given for days missed due to incomplete medical records
- 3.) If tuition is not paid for two consecutive months, children cannot attend school.

Immunization and Medical Examinations

New York State requires that each child entering school for the first time have a physical examination. In addition, immunizations are required for admission to school. Lead screening and required immunizations are listed on the school health form. A child may not be permitted to enter school if immunization requirements are not met. A completed health form must be on file with the school by the first day of school for your child to attend school.

Age Requirements

Two-Year Old Program

Child must be two years old by December 1st

Children do not need to be toilet trained. Parents or caregivers must be available to change diapers and/or soiled clothing.

Three-Year Old Program

Child must be three years old by December 1st

Children must be toilet trained. Occasional accidents are expected, and leeway is given for the first 3 months. A change of clothing that remains at school is required. In the event of an accident, if children are able, they may change themselves. If children are unable to change their soiled clothes, the parent or caregiver must be available to change the child.

School Calendar & Hours

The school calendar is available in August. Changes to the original calendar will be communicated via written notices, e-mail, Class DoJO and white board notices posted at the school entrances. Teachers will send home monthly class calendars and post them on Class DoJo at the beginning of each month.

School Hours & Sessions

Two-Year-Old Program (2 – 2.5 hours)

2 Day Program:

9:00 – 11:00 am Tuesday/Thursday (Sept – Dec)

9:00 – 11:30am Tuesday/Thursday ((Jan – June)

3 Day Program:

9:00 – 11:00am Monday/Wednesday/Friday (Sept – Dec)

9:00 – 11:30am Monday/ Wednesday/ Friday (Jan – June)

5 Day Program:

9:00 – 11:00 am Monday – Friday (Sept – Dec)

9:00 – 11:30 am Monday – Friday (Jan – June)

Three-Year Old Program (3 hours)

4 Day Program

9:00 – 12:00 pm Monday - Thursday

5 Day Program

9:00 – 12:00 pm Monday - Friday

Emergency Closings

If school must be closed due to inclement weather or other emergency circumstances, several methods will be available to communicate the closing. These include:

- A message will be on the Early Childhood Center answering machine – (516) 378-4322
- A text message via the CLASS DOJO system will be sent to all parents.
- An email message will be sent out to all parents.
- In the event of an emergency requiring the evacuation of the building children our emergency locations are as follows:
Primary: Corbe Hall, 1 Van Roo Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566
Secondary: 1870 Merrick Avenue, Merrick Avenue Middle School

Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for optimum instruction, growth and development of students. If your child is going to be absent, please call the School Administrative Center at (516) 378 – 4322 to report the absence and the reason.

School Absences

Sometimes it is difficult for a parent to decide whether to send your child to school. Although we strongly recommend regular and punctual attendance, we also encourage parents to follow their instincts and err on the side of caution and keep your child home if he or she has any signs or symptoms of a contagious illness. For example:

- Fever greater than 100 degrees orally, or a fever that requires medication. Children should be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.
- Child is sleepy or lethargic.
- Child has vomited or had diarrhea 24 hours prior to attending school.
- Sore throat
- Red, runny or crusty eyes
- Ear pain
- Headache
- Any condition you are not sure of and may be contagious to others.
- Significant cough
- Runny nose, especially green/yellow mucus
- Rashes, hives or welts

No medications will be given at school. The school should be notified immediately if the child develops a contagious disease. The staff will also be alert to any of the symptoms noted above. If any symptoms are observed the child's parent and/or caregiver will be notified to come to the school. The child will be removed from the classroom and wait in the School Administrative Center until a parent and/or caregiver arrives.

Emergency Cards

An Emergency Contact Card must be on file with the school by the first day of school for your child to attend school. Parents must indicate the best way to reach them in case of an illness or accident during the school day. Three emergency contacts need to be included. Emergency contacts must be local and able to reach the school in a timely fashion (approximately 15 minutes after a call). In addition, emergency contacts should have given permission to include their name and number. It is important to keep your emergency card updated.

Arrival & Dismissal Procedures

Parents and/or caregivers provide transportation. Parents and/or caregivers do not enter the building at arrival or dismissal unless requested.

Arrival Two-Year Old Program

Parents should bring their child to the back door entrance by the parking lot near the playground. Parents should escort their child by the hand up to the door where they will be greeted and taken into their classrooms by their teachers.

Dismissal Two-Year Old Program

Parents should wait on the sidewalk at the back of the parking lot near the playground. Children will be brought to the door by their teacher. Parents should step up to the door and take their child by the hand to escort away.

Arrival Three-Year Old 4 Day Program

Parents should bring their child to the Chapel doors on the Margaret Blvd. side of the building (doors with handicapped ramp). Parents should escort their child by the hand up to the door where they will be greeted and taken to their classroom by Early Childhood Center staff.

Dismissal Three-Year Old 4 Day Program

Parents should wait on the sidewalk leading to the Chapel doors on the Margaret Blvd. side of the building (doors with the handicapped ramp). Children will be brought to the door by the teacher or teacher aide. Parents should step up to the door and take their child by the hand down the steps.

Arrival Three-Year old 5 Day Program Parents should bring their child to the Fellowship Hall doors on the Margaret Blvd. side of the building. Parents should escort their child by the hand up the door where they will be greeted and taken to their classroom by Early Childhood Center staff.

Dismissal Three-Year Old 5 Day Program

Parents should wait on the sidewalk leading to the Fellowship Hall doors on the Margaret Blvd. side of the building. Children will be brought to the door by the teacher or teacher aide. Parents should step up to the door and take their child by the hand down the steps.

Intercom System

If you are dropping off or picking up your child any time other than scheduled class times or in the event of an emergency, please use our intercom boxes located at both the Chapel door and Fellowship Hall door entrances. Press the button on the intercom, wait for someone to answer and begin speaking. The call will go directly to the Administrative Center.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children will be released only to those individuals authorized by the parents. Any changes in who will be picking up a child should be promptly reported to the school. Parents will be issued yellow "Dismissal Passes." Parents and/or designated individuals must show their dismissal pass in order to pick-up their child. If a parent and/or designated individual does not have a dismissal pass, photo I.D. must be shown. Parental concerns regarding a particular person who is not authorized to pick-up a child should be clearly communicated to the teacher and director. If the need arises, parents can call the school to request a release to a specific person – they will need photo I.D.

If a parent is late, the staff will first call the cell phone number provided. If the parent cannot be reached within 10 minutes, the first emergency contact listed on their Emergency Contact Card will be contacted. The staff will continue with the emergency contacts provided until a parent, caregiver or emergency contact can be reached and pick-up the child. Staff will remain with the child.

Special Pick-Up

A parent or authorized adult must be available to pick-up a child who is ill immediately after notification is received. Parents must provide a local authorized adult to contact in the event that they are unable to pick-up a sick child (see emergency card). If your child is picked up early or dropped off late you must sign the child in and out in our Log Book. All children who arrive late or need to be picked up early should utilize the Fellowship Hall Doors.

Parking

Parking is permitted in the parking lot adjacent to the building and on Margaret Blvd. and Van Roo Avenue. Parents need to be respectful of our neighbors' driveways and not block them at any time. Please **DO NOT PARK** in the

handicapped zone located on south side of Margaret Blvd., even if you are only stopping “for a minute.” As parking is limited, parents should leave themselves ample time to park and walk their child to the school entrance.

Communication

We believe that good communication with parents is a benefit to the children in our care and will do our best to keep parents up to date. Some of the ways we will communicate are as follows:

- ***School backpacks and folders*** – Children attending all programs are asked to bring a backpack and folder of their own choice. Please make sure that your child brings their backpack and folder each time they attend school.
- ***Notices & newsletters*** – important notices, newsletters, forms and classroom projects will be distributed and placed in your child’s folder. Please check and empty your child’s folder every day.
- ***Class lists*** – each parent will be provided with a class list of your child’s classmates. The list includes addresses and phone numbers. If you do not want to provide your address or phone number on the class list, please notify the Director prior to the start of the school year.
- ***Invitations*** – party invitations will be distributed by the ECC staff if EVERY child in the class is invited. If you wish to have invitations distributed, please give them to your class teacher or assistant at the beginning of your session – invitations found in a child’s backpack will be distributed at the following class session. Thank you notes or playdate requests will not be distributed.
- ***Tuition payments*** – tuition payments are collected through an electronic payment program. Parents complete the “New Authorization Form,” available on the school website, stjohnsmerrick.org when they register their child for school.
- ***Notes to the teacher*** – if you wish to send a note to your child’s teacher, the director or any Early Childhood Center staff, you may place it in your child’s folder.
- ***E-mail*** – parents need to submit a working email address.
- ***ClassDoJo*** – parents will be asked to download the free app for this text messaging system. Emergency notices, school and class announcements will be communicated with this system. This will serve as the primary method of communication. You can send messages to your child’s teacher, the ECC Director, or the Assistant to the Director via this system.

Daily Program Routines

Two- Year-Old Daily Program

Attendance
Circle Time
Center Play
Clean-Up
Snack Time
Story Time
Art/Craft Activity
Large Motor Play, Indoor or Outdoor
Get Ready for Dismissal

Three- Year- Old Daily Program

Arrival, hang coats, unpack backpacks
Opening Circle Time; attendance, prayer, Bible verse, Pledge of Allegiance, weather, calendar, weekly focus skills
Craft activity; painting, gluing, cutting, coloring
Snack Time
Learning Centers
Learning Activities: matching, sequencing, sorting and fine motor skills games, sensory table, finger plays, music, and body movement.
Bathroom Break
Large Motor play- outdoor playground, indoor Fellowship Hall gym
Story Time
Specials: Chapel, Music occurs once a month
Pack-up, dismissal.

Daily Program Needs

Children should wear comfortable, casual clothing to school, and be dressed for outdoor play every day. Rubber soled shoes or sneakers are necessary for their safety. Children in both the two-year-old and the three-year-old programs are asked to provide their own backpack and folder. The backpack needs to be large enough to carry home notes and papers; children need to be able to open and close their backpack with help.

Children in the two and three-year old program will supply an extra set of clothing in a large zip lock bag at the beginning of the school year. Extra clothing will be stored at school and returned at the end of the school year.

All your child's belongings: coats, jackets school bags, and so forth need to be labeled with your child's name.

Special Programs

Starting in September with “Hello Day,” several special programs are scheduled for parents and family. Special programs include:

- ***Hello Day*** – for parents and Early Childhood Center children only, generally held a day or two prior to the start of the school year.
- ***Parent Orientation*** (Meet the Teacher Night)– for parents only, generally held the first week of school, in the evening.
- ***In-House Programs*** – children in our three and four-year old programs will participate in Chapel Time and Music Fun on a monthly basis. Children in our two-year old program will participate in Music Fun.
- ***In-House Events*** – programs will be announced throughout the year and include Scholastic Book Club, a visit from the North Merrick Fire Department, visits by various community helpers and special art and learning workshops.
- ***In-House Celebrations*** – during the year there will be several celebrations such as a Halloween Parade, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas Performance, Easter Egg Hunt, and a Mother’s Day Tea, where parents will be invited to participate and special schedules will be announced.
- ***Field Trips*** – children in our three old programs participate (with their parents) in our White Post Farms field trip. Completed permission slips and trip fees are collected prior to the trip. Additional field trips will be announced during the year.
- ***Recognition Ceremonies*** – family and friends are invited to share and celebrate the end of our school year for each of our programs.

Add-On Programs:

St. John’s Early Childhood Center has add-on Partnership Programs which extend our school day. These programs are licensed programs with vendors who charge their own registration fees, monthly tuition or session-based rates. All fees are paid directly to these vendors. Add-on programs for our Three-year old’s run daily from 12:00 – 1:00, and for our Two-Year old Children, from 11:00-11:30 (Sept-Dec) and 11:30 – 12:00 (Jan-June) on select days. Program schedules will be announced at the beginning of the school year.

Evaluations

Children are regularly evaluated regarding their readiness for school and meeting developmental norms. Should it be determined that a child is not ready for our school, the child may be dismissed from the school. Reasons for dismissal include immaturity, excessive clinging to a parent or teacher, aggressive behavior, uncontrollable scratching, biting, hitting or pushing and tantrums.

Progress Reports & Parent/Teacher Conferences

Progress reports are used to indicate appropriate growth and academic progress.

Two-Year Old Program

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held twice a year, in Fall and Spring. A progress report is provided in the spring.

Three-Year Old Program

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held twice a year, in Fall and Spring. A progress report is provided in the Spring.

School Policies

Discipline and Aggression

St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center has established the following discipline and aggression policies for children.

Discipline Policy

A very important part of the preschool experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. A caring and positive approach will be taken regarding behavior management and discipline. At no time is a child left alone. Our goal is to help children develop self-control and responsibility for their actions.

Our discipline procedures will consist of the following strategies:

1. Encouraging children to use their words when having a disagreement with another child. Teaching staff will facilitate children in their attempts to settle their own disputes.
2. Redirecting behavior when this seems potentially effective.
3. Counseling children individually about their behaviors during class time.
4. Separating a child from the group (Time-Out) for certain behaviors– one minute away for each year of age. Child will be always under direct supervision of a staff member. At no time will a child be left alone. When the child acknowledges their behavior and has calmed down, they can return to the group.
5. If it has been necessary to separate a child from the group, parents will be notified.

Aggression Policy

Aggression will be defined as children who hurt others to the extent of leaving a mark, such as biting, punching, throwing objects and scratching, as well as the use of hurtful language including cursing and name calling.

Our aggression procedures will consist of the following:

1. At the first occurrence, the children involved must be separated, and both parents called about the incident. Any injuries will be attended to. At the time of the first incident, it will be clearly communicated to the parents that if this occurs again, the aggressive child may be asked to leave the school.
2. At the second occurrence, the parent of the aggressive child must come to the school and immediately withdraw the child for the remainder of the day. The child will remain suspended from school until the Director, Early Childhood Staff and Early Childhood Center Committee meet, discuss and evaluate whether the child should be reinstated into the program.

Food Allergy Policy

Food allergies have become increasingly common and can have fatal consequences. A severely allergic person can go into anaphylactic shock upon the most minimal exposure to foods, including touching or breathing trace amounts of substances to which they are allergic.

It is an important part of the philosophy of St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center to provide a safe environment for all children in our care. Therefore, St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center never serves peanut butter, other nuts or products containing those ingredients to its students. We also do not permit students to bring these products to school, for their own consumption or for a shared snack. Out of an abundance of caution we also prohibit children from bringing peanut butter substitutes, such as Sun Butter for snack or lunch. When in doubt, please err on the side of safety and do not send in any questionable food.

Parents whose children have severe food allergies are invited to review the food labels on snacks served at school. In addition, parents whose children have severe food allergies can provide a "safe" snack to be used on special occasions when the snack is provided by someone other than the school.

Teachers must be aware of and make a note in their plan books regarding the presence of students with food allergies in their class, as well as the location of the appropriate medications. Each class has a posted chart of children with allergies. The posted chart as well as plan book notation will enable anyone who comes into the classroom as a substitute to be prepared for an allergic emergency.

Medical Emergency

Students who require epinephrine (EPI-PEN), Benadryl, asthma inhalers or nebulizers to prevent life-threatening conditions must contact the Director to establish an Individual Health Care Plan prior to the start of school.

Open Door Policy

St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center has an open-door policy. This policy is based upon the belief that a child's development is best promoted through a partnership between home and school.

Parents and all others can visit our school throughout the day without prior appointment. Parents and guardians must sign-in and sign-out in the School Administrative Center. All others are considered visitors who must pre-arrange their visits and sign in and sign-out in the School Administrative Center.

NYS Mandated Reporter Policy

All St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center staff are required by law to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment, such as repeated bruising, changes in behavior or evidence of neglect to the New York State Central Register (SCR) of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, also known as the Child Abuse Hotline and the Nassau County Office of Protective Services. The law also assigns civil and criminal liability to those professionals who do not comply with their mandated reporter abilities.

New York State Office of Children & Family Services

Mandated Reporter Hotline (800) 635-1522

Public Hotline (800) 342-3720

Nassau County Office of Protective Services

Business Hours (516) 227-8133

Non-Business Hours (516) 572-3143

Nassau County Protective Services Program Office

60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd.

Uniondale, NY 11553

Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child abuse or maltreatment – or cause a report to be made – when, in their professional roles, they are presented with *reasonable cause* to suspect abuse or maltreatment.

Parents who suspect child abuse or maltreatment at school can call the New York State Office of Children & Family Services Public Hotline (800) 342-3720 or the Nassau County Office of Social Services 24-hour Hotline (800) 342-3720.

If you suspect your child has been abused in our care, you are requested to immediately contact the Director or the Pastor to discuss your concerns. If abuse is still suspected after this discussion, you may call 1-800-342-3720.

Safety Policy

1. No child will be left alone or unsupervised.
2. All doors will be locked at all times.
3. Security cameras are at all of our school entrances, with a monitor in the Director's Administrative Center.
4. First aid and CPR trained staff will be always on site while school is in session.

5. Children will be met and dismissed by a staff member.
6. A telephone will be available in every classroom.
7. Fire drills will be conducted regularly in accordance with New York State regulations. Evacuation plans are listed in the classrooms.
8. A first aid case will be readily available and taken on all field trips.
9. Emergency numbers will be posted on all phones.
10. The staff will not change diapers or soiled clothing. Parents will be called if a child has defecated in or vomited in their clothes. A child who has wet them self, or whose clothes become unwearable, will be supervised by two adults while changing their clothes in a private area if they are able.
11. Each child will have a medical emergency form on file containing current addresses and phone numbers. Parents are responsible for notifying the school of changes in the information on this form.

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form

St. John's Lutheran Church

Early Childhood Center

Dear Parents.

The Office of Child and Family Services of the State of New York requires that each parent or guardian acknowledge receipt of this Policy Handbook. Please fill out the form below and return it to the School Administrative Center by the start of school.

I, _____, the parent/guardian of _____,
(please print) (please print child's name)

Acknowledge that I have received access to the St. John's Lutheran Church Early Childhood Center School Policy Handbook. I understand that I have the right to ask questions regarding any aspect of the policies outlined in the Handbook.

Date: _____

Signature: _____