



St Thomas the Apostle Nursery School

Parent Handbook

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A COPY OF OUR HANDBOOK IS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE FOR
DOWNLOAD

www.stthomastheapostlenurseryschool.ca

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1) *Table of Contents*
- 2) *Programs Statement, Program Goals & Approaches, Program Goals # 1*
- 3) *Program Goals # 2 - 3*
- 4) *Program Goals # 3 Continued & Goals # 4- 5*
- 5) *Program Goals # 5 Continued & Goals # 6 - 10*
- 6) *Program Goals # 11, Administration Information, Overview of Program Options: Program Curriculum & Program Hours of Operation Chart*
- 7) *Programs Offered; Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Full Day, Bilingual School Readiness PM & Kinder/School Age*
- 8) *Sleeping Requirements, Program Fees Chart*
- 9) *Late Pickup Policy*
- 10) *Parent Issues & Concerns Policy and Procedures; Confidentiality, Conduct*
- 11) *Concerns about the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child & Reporting Chart*
- 12) *Licensing and Standards, Staffing Information, Supervision of Volunteers & Students Policy (Intent & Requirements)*
- 13) *Requirements Continued, Policy Statements, School Year Closures, Holidays & Inclement Weather Procedures, Registration and Waitlist Policy*
- 14) *Registration and Waitlist Policy Continued, Fee Policy and Refunds, Program Withdrawal & Children with Special Needs*
- 15) *Introducing your Child to the Program # 1 – 6, Arrival and Departure/ Attendance & Absence*
- 16) *Filed Trips, Mandatory Police Check for Volunteers, Child Guidance and Prohibited Practices*
- 17) *Preferred Behaviour Guidance Practices (Plan the Environment, Time, Materials)*
- 18) *Verbal Guidance and Redirection (Prevention, Monitoring), Prohibited Behaviour Guidance Practices # 1 – 2*
- 19) *Prohibited Behaviour Guidance Practices Continued # 3-6, Contravention of Behaviour Guidance Practices For: (Staff, Students & Volunteers, Others, Including Parents), Review and Retention of Policies & Procedures # 1 – 6*
- 20) *Snack & Lunch Time, Nutrition Policy & Chart*
- 21) *Allergy Information, Health & Medication*
- 22) *Clothing & Belongings, Fire Safety & Emergencies, Transportation & Parking*
- 23) *Volunteers, School Communication, Donations, Fundraising & Parent Handbook Revision Date*

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Our mission statement: To offer families and children the greatest experience and the highest quality of care while with our qualified early childhood educators.

Our vision: We are devoted to the art of caring. Our focus centers on children learning through play and family's needs with socialization as a priority.

Our values: We will act with integrity and will value and protect our relationships. Our work will be the best that we can offer.

PROGRAM GOALS & APPROACHES

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery school has set forth the following goals and approaches: to plan and create a positive learning environment and to support each individual child's needs. We are confident in our programs quality and ability to lead your child's development of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. We are confident your child will meet all four foundations identified in "How Does Learning Happen" as set out in Ontario's pedagogy for the Early Years.

For more information regarding "How Does Learning Happen?" please see this website:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

PROGRAM GOALS:

1. To promote the health, safety and well-being of the children.
 - We establish safety inside and outside ensuring the children are in charge of their basic needs and emotions.
 - We encourage the children to walk inside and keep the running for outside; we set up our rooms for the children's success via their interests; we put our materials in a way that the children will not trip or fall.
 - We cover all open plugs to keep safety a priority.
 - We ensure the children are able to be physically active outside within our age appropriate playgrounds.
 - We establish a foundation for healthy eating by offering the children their choice of snack and how much they would like to have at each sitting.
 - We have special healthy sharing days taking into account brain development with protein, carbs and water for mental wellbeing.
 - Children are able to self regulate and choose their activity. We strive to have children manage their own emotions.
 - We create many stimulating, safe environments to choose from. We expand on the children's interests when we see they are having questions about subjects. We offer assistance when needed.
 - Staff familiarize themselves with each child's file for any needs/allergies, signing any plan that is in place for allergies or restrictions. We also ask families for a picture of their child for the child's file, ensuring new staff would recognize children as well.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

2. We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff.
 - We foster a sense of belonging and ownership in our nursery school. We do this by sending newsletters, emails, posting pictures and antidotes to elicit questions. We have many parent volunteers that help with fundraising, board of directors.
 - We have special get together throughout the year for family inclusion.
 - We encourage the connections between family and educators by ensuring we greet the children every morning, being attuned to the child's feelings and responding appropriately.
 - We offer our assistance when warranted with children, ensuring we are available for play.
 - We keep routines flexible so children will feel in charge of what is happening next.
 - We develop policies and procedures for staff to adhere to within the modernization act.
 - We integrate elements in our program to ensure children feel valued by documenting their work on the walls etc. We display their artwork and quotes within our centre.
 - We take pictures of the children while participating in activities to encourage deeper connections.
 - We offer options for play if the child is struggling to interact; we help facilitate an activity alongside or with another child.
 - We have activities ready for the children to explore.
 - Invitations to play are set up in each room.
 - We give an authentic response about a child's activities throughout the day, promoting a conversation through child and family.
 - We collect and display family photos of staff, children and families. We add this to our daily play by displaying on walls, blocks, toys in rooms and hallways.
 - We model and mentor children with other children and staff realizing they are co-learners.
 - We use other ways of communication other than words; touch of the hand, eye-to-eye communication, pictures etc. Considerations we, as educators, use are: family beliefs/cultures and holidays.
(How we can ensure all families are being included in the centre consistently?)
 - ✓ Have we explored all that is available to our center's families?
 - ✓ Did we have an emphasis on the positive?
 - ✓ Did we offer open-ended questions to children so they feel involved?
 - ✓ Did we use reflective practice of "What did this offer today", "Why did this not work?"
 - ✓ What could we have done differently?"
 - ✓ What outcome were we expecting and what happened?"
 - ✓ What was the purpose?"
 - ✓ Did we give attention to the positive and not the negative?"

3. Ways in which we encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way while supporting their ability to self-regulate:
 - We provide opportunities to support the children in our centre; we do this by providing children with many activities and materials to choose from; we recognize all children have different interests and respond differently in situations.
 - Educators observe, inquire and provide feedback to children and families.
 - We observe and document what the children's interests are while offering open-ended resources.
 - We communicate directly with parents via email, hiMama and in person when this is available.
 - We provide open ended questions to children so the children can make their own choices and decisions.
 - We offer photos to invite to play ("pictures of real items not cartoon pictures").

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

- We allow enough time and flexibility of time for children to regulate their beginning and ending of activities; we often extend snack while children finish their activity or “save” their plans thus creating a sense of belonging.
- We prepare the environment for success; if we have challenges (running, throwing, not able to line up etc.) we problem solve to see what will work easier, ensuring a sense of success not failure with the children and groups.
- We step back to observe rather than "policing".
- We do not interrupt children's play, we observe.
- We make a welcoming space for the children.
- We make outside time interactive; we offer the same experiences outside that we have inside; animals, cars, books, etc.
- We offer an electronic on-line service for parents and families so we can communicate what the children are doing throughout their time with us, often giving quotes of the children.
- We use a communication log a general log book.
- We make story boards throughout the centre.
- We fundraise for items on the centres wish list.
- We invite parents to events.

4. Ways in which children foster their ability to explore play and inquiry:

- We offer a variety of activities! Children may choose what they would like to play while we provide new experiences.
- Children choose their playmates.
- Children choose how long they would like to play in various areas.
- Children are exposed to play in all areas.
- Staff encourage self-motivation and self-regulation by offering words to the children and by asking children questions etc.
- The educator follows the child's lead for experiences and expand on those; e.g.: If children are interested in Farm animals one day, we may ask the child about their experiences with seeing farm animals, then post pictures of the animals that they have seen. We may add a carpet for grass or add people, food or other farm related items for children to expand their imagination and knowledge. Snack could consist of items that are from farm animals.
- Children develop their senses via the many activities simultaneously in our areas of play: art, sand, water, gross motor, dramatic, music, puzzles, fine motor etc.
- Children explore their knowledge and vocabulary with other children their age while in either our toddler or preschool programs.
- Staff will expand the child's language by facilitating dialogues between the children.
- Children are always encouraged to mediate and solve dilemmas.
- Staff set up the room taking into account the children's interests while expanding the children's knowledge base. The staff take the position as the co-learner, knowing the children are competent and capable.

5. We provide a child-initiated and adult-supported experience every day for the children in our center. We do this by letting children choose the toys they explore with inside and outside, ensuring to change the toys as the children's interests change. We provide a variety of items that are accessible in inside and out. We provide the children with children sized toilets and sinks to support positive experience while training. Snack time is also self-regulated by children by the children choosing what they would like to have for snack. We offer a fruit, cheese, crackers and water daily.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

We set the rooms up so the children can choose their activity. For example, we offer a variety of puzzles, books, crafts, sensory and gross motor activities every day. The children may choose which activity they would like to be in then choose when they would like to move to another activity. An educator remains with each activity for facilitating the play. The children may ask for help to complete a task, as the educator is always available to assist.

6. We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported. We do this by setting up the activities to encourage independence. We introduce ideas and expand on the ideas creating knowledge-based learning.

7. We incorporate indoor and outdoor play as well as active play; rest and quiet time into the day and give consideration to the individual needs of the children in our care. We do this by providing a well-rounded day with the children that has the flexibility to ensure that the individual needs of the children are met. We provide opportunities to go outside and offer play materials outside an hour in the morning and the same in the afternoon. We also provide active areas in the rooms with the appropriate equipment for the children to choose from. We ensure we have quiet areas in all the rooms for the children to choose if they need to. We also provide "down time" after the lunch program where the children may choose a variety of fine motor activities or group activities to relax.

8. At St. Thomas the apostle Nursery School, we foster the engagement of the ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children. We do this by documentation with pictures with activities and writing what is happening in the picture, ensuring to post for parents to ask questions or comment on with their child. We write quotes of what the children say throughout the day. We post documentation in the hallways for parents to view during pick up, drop off or anytime throughout the year. We plan and facilitate gatherings throughout the year for families to join together with children and staff, offering conversation starters about the program and what we are doing with the children. We plan an annual family run and year end BBQ. We offer many resources to parents to sign up and receive ongoing communication from our program and staff. We offer "HiMama", our website and monthly calendar and newsletters via email. We also communicate ongoing with parents during drop off and pickup, giving some positive feedback regarding their child's success within our program!

9. St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School involves local community partners and allow these partners to support the children, the families and staff. We are inclusive by asking parents/community member volunteers to bring their ideas to our center via our Board of Directors or by invitations to help create an atmosphere of community. We have had painting parties in our playground, planting flowers and vegetables, leaf raking, volunteering with the children, speaking to the children about their jobs and careers; we even have a parent sharing her pregnancy with our preschool groups!

10. We support staff or others who interact with children in our care. We have supported professional learning for all staff but also share professional learning with families via email, via information boards in our centre, Google drive and print outs! Our budget allows for staff paid leave and pays for workshops. We encourage all staff to continue reflective practice of their days, their strategies and challenges.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

11. We document and review the impact of strategies on children and families by sharing stories, pictures and quotes via our electronic on-line service portal and we ask for feedback anonymously and on our website. We have parent feedback forms along with parent surveys. We have parent reps on our Board of Directors, encouraging all families to be part of our open meetings. We keep minutes of our meetings and review for the following meeting month and year. We also do planning via feedback for the year.

Our program statement is a living document that changes as the program evolves along with children, staff, families and the community.

ADMINISTRATION

Volunteer members of St. Thomas the Apostle Church started the Nursery School in 1968. Since that time, in response to the demand for preschool education in the Alta Vista area, it has grown into a nondenominational and community based licensed childcare center offering half day care to 32 preschool children from 9-11:30 am and 15 toddler from 9-11:30 am. The program and daily operation of the school are the responsibility of the Executive Director.

Celebrating our 50th year in 2018, we began the process of expanding our programs from nursery school only to full day preschool options as well as kinder/school age options! In 2021 we opened our full day infant program. Now in 2022, we have spaces for 10 infants, 14 toddlers, 24 preschool children, 44 kinder/school age children and 30 part day Nursery School children. We have definitely grown since our opening in 1968!

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM OPTIONS

Program Curriculum

The curriculum for each program is explored daily through “How Does Learning Happen” theology. Parents are invited to sign up to our “electronic on-line portal” account and view pictures of their children with documentation. Flexibility, however, is a key component to the programming and any new learning opportunities that arise are readily incorporated into the curriculum. These activities are developmentally appropriate for each of the different age groups and incorporate child-directed activities and educator-directed activities. Children choose from activities in the gross motor area, the arts and crafts area, the dramatic play area, the science area and the fine motor area. During the structured circle time, the teachers incorporate letter and number recognition, singing, instruments, finger plays, stories and games. Our Educators focus on ensuring we treat each child as capable and competent individuals. We firmly believe in children’s choices and ensure to help them through self-regulation.

Program Hours of Operation

	Nursery School Program	Nursery school Program LUNCH PROGRAM	Kinder/Schoolage PROGRAM	Full-day Infant, toddler and Preschool
DROP-OFF	9:00- 9:15 a.m.	Can be added to the A.M. program for Nursery school	7:30- 8:30 a.m.	7:30 to 5:30 currently we close at 5:00 due to covid
PICK-UP	11:15-11:30 a.m.	After Lunch Pick-up will be : 12:30 p.m.	3:30-5:30 p.m. currently 5:00 due to covid During these times the children will be involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Games • Planned Activities • outside play 	

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

PROGRAMS OFFERED AT ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE NURSERY SCHOOL

Infant Program

Our infant program is located in our large room with a washroom so our infants educators do not have to leave the program. The educator/child ratio is 1:3 and there is a maximum of 10 children per group. The educators have lots of innovative activities planned with the children throughout their day with us. We have a separated nap area with cribs, sleep sacks and a calming sound machine. Our educators take the infants for walks or enjoy our new soft surfacing playground made especially for our infant program. Infant families are required to pack their own morning snacks, lunch, afternoon snacks, milk/formula to be kept in the classroom fridge daily. Infants are introduced to different foods and different eating styles and different ages that our program could not adapt to. When registering in our infant program, your child may become of age to "graduate" to toddler however your child will move to the toddler group as soon as our programs will allow. Our centre follows a process that is mandated through the city of Ottawa and keeping with good business practices. The fees charged in the infant room do not change with the age of your child, the fees charged are proportionate to the staff to child ratio needed to meet our Ministry of Education regulations.

Toddler Program

The Toddler Program is held in a spacious and comfortable newly renovated area with 3 large windows and a toddler sized washroom with two toilets and two sinks. The educator/child ratio is 1:5 and there is a maximum of 14 children per group. The educators have activities planned to help the children develop their skills for everyday life. Each child is required to have a diaper, wipes, indoor shoes, water bottle and a change of clothes in his/her backpack. The educators support the parents in their efforts to toilet train and will take a child to the washroom at least once throughout the morning or as needed.

Preschool Program

The Preschool Program is held in our beautifully renovated huge space with 4 very large windows to bring in sunlight and warmth. The children have a large washroom with 3 toilets and 3 sinks. Children arrive between 7:30 -9:30, our educators have plans that will stimulate your child to be healthy, inquisitive and confident. Preschool children may nap or if transitioning out of nap, we have an accordion door in the middle of the room that allows for more planned, French activities on the "non nap" side. Our on-site chef prepares healthy and exciting meals for the children. You can follow your child's activities by logging onto our HiMama app that allows you access to their day. You would need to supply diapers/wipes if needed, indoor shoes, a water bottle to leave for us to clean daily, a change of clothes and spray sunscreen.

Kinder/School Age Program

The Kinder/school age Program is held on the stage and hall of the center. Our Educators will focus on homework, socialization, and games and activities planned with the groups. We will offer choices to the children encouraging group work and leadership.

- NOTE: Children who opt into our full day program have naptime/quiet time available to them. Parents must be advised of the St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School obligations under the CCEYA and this policy

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

SLEEPING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

Parents must be advised of the following policy.

With regards to children who regularly sleep on the premises:

- Parents will be consulted respecting a child's sleeping arrangements at the time the child is enrolled and at any other appropriate time, such as at transitions between programs or rooms or upon a parent's request. Parent requests will be on the sleep chart. Parents check sleep chart daily.
 - Children must be assigned to individual cots (preschool) or mats (kindergarten). All mats or cots must meet Canadian Safety Standards.
 - Staff must be in the room during sleep or rest periods.
 - Children must receive visual checks by Educators/EAs every 15 minutes.
 - Visual checks require the Staff to be physically present beside the child while the child is sleeping.
 - During visual checks the Staff must look for indicators of distress or unusual behaviours.
 - There must be sufficient light to conduct the visual check.
 - Observances of any significant changes in a child's sleeping patterns or behaviour's during sleep must be communicated to parents and the Executive Director/Program Supervisor.
 - Noted changes will/may result in adjustments to the manner in which the child is supervised during sleep.
 - All visual checks must be documented. The documentation charts includes:
 1. Visual checks must be done physically beside the child every 30 minutes.
 2. Time child went to sleep.
 3. Time child woke up.
 4. Staff must look for indicators of distress/unusual behaviour and note it on chart.
- Legend: S – Sleeping, R – Restless, A – Awake

PROGRAM FEES

**Catered lunches can be added to ½ Day Nursery School for: (2-lunches per week: \$120.00 per month)	2 Mornings per Week: (M/W or T/Th)	3 Mornings per Week: (M/W/F or T/Th/F)	5 Days M-F	Full Days
Infant program	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1700/month
Toddler	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1300/month
Nursery School Program 9-11:30	\$ 190.00 Per Month	\$ 285.00 Per Month	\$ 475.00	
Full Day Preschool 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.				\$ 1280/month
Sept-June Kinder Care School Age Care			AM only PM only B/A together	\$300/month \$375/month \$ 550/month
Summer School Kinder/ School Age – FULL DAY 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.				\$ 50.00 Per Day
School PD Days - (Kinder)				\$50.00 Per Day

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

LATE PICKUP POLICY

Depending on the program your child is enrolled in; parents/guardians, are asked to plan sufficient time to dress their child, collect the child's clothes, artwork, speak to a staff (if necessary) and leave the Centre by program end time.

If the parent/guardian is aware that they are going to be late, they should call/message on HiMama the Centre to advise staff of this and of their plan to pick up their child/ren.

Due to the operational and staffing costs incurred when a parent/guardian is late, a **late pickup fee** will be charged.

Late Pickup Fees Schedule is as follows:

- From program end time the fee for being late is:
\$10.00 for the first 5 minutes then \$1.00 per minute until an hour has passed.
- If late three times in any eight-week period, the family faces removal from the Centre. If this happens you will be asked to come to a board of directors meeting for decision of suspension or dismissal from our program.
- The nursery school (Ipad) will be used to determine the late payment.
- Late fees are to be paid within 48 hours.
- If an hour has passed and we have not heard from you or we have not been able to reach you or your emergency contacts, we will call Children's Aid Society for clarification of next steps.

Staff on duty will complete a late fee payment form, which is to be signed by the parent/guardian. By signing the form the parent/guardian acknowledges that they are late and agrees to the amount due. The fee is payable to the staff member(s) on duty.

This policy will be reviewed with all staff annually and the staff will sign to demonstrate they have read and understood the policy.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

PARENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in our child care centre and regularly discuss what their child/children are experiencing with our program. As supported by our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, child care providers and staff, and foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children. Our staff is available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during every interaction.

All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School and will be addressed accordingly. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Where parents feel that policies are not being followed, the Executive Director is to be notified first either verbally or in writing as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation. The Executive Director will respond to the notification within 3 business days. If the Executive Director is unavailable to respond within the 3 business days, the designate will respond in lieu.

If the outcome of the response is unsatisfactory, the parent must then formally state their grievance in writing to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then respond in writing within 3 business days.

If the outcome of the response is still unsatisfactory the parent involved may approach the Board by providing the board with proof of the second notification to the Executive Director. A letter of explanation from the parent must be sent to the Board at least one week in advance of the meeting. The Board will then review the matter and as necessary, arrange for statements from the parties involved and will respond in writing within 2 weeks.

If the grievance is not resolved in the two weeks following the Board meeting, the parent has the right to request a special meeting of the Board. The Board will schedule a special meeting within a month of receiving the request and all parties may also seek external professional advice. At this meeting a decision will be made and all parties concerned will be notified, in writing of the decision. Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial and respectful to all parties involved.

Confidentiality

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Conduct

Our centre maintains high standards for positive interaction, communication and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party. If at any point a parent/guardian, provider or staff feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the supervisor and/or licensee.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

Concerns about the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the [local Children's Aid Society](#) (CAS) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to [CAS](#) as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to Issue/Concern
<p>Program Room-Related</p> <p>E.g.: schedule, sleep arrangements, toilet training, indoor/outdoor program activities, feeding arrangements, etc.</p>	<p>Raise the issue/ concern to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Staff directly • Executive Director/designate 	<p>Address the issue/concern at the time it is raised</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Arrange for a meeting with the parent/guardian within 3 business days.</p>
<p>General, Centre or Operations Related</p> <p>E.g.: child care fees, hours of operation, staffing, waiting lists, menus, etc.</p>	<p>Raise the issue/concern to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Director/designate 	<p>Document the issues/concerns in detail using the Parent/Guardian Issues/Concern form.</p> <p>Provide contact information for the appropriate person if the person being notified is unable to address the matter.</p>
<p>Staff, Duty- parent, Supervisor, and/or Licensee Related</p>	<p>Raise the issue/concern to:</p> <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual directly • The Executive Director/designate <p>All issues or concerns about the conduct of: Staff, duty-parents, etc., that places a child's health, safety and well-being at risk should be reported to the supervisor as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.</p>	<p>The investigation of the issue/concern will be initiated by the Executive Director within 3 business days or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. Reasons for delays will be documented in writing.</p> <p>Provide a resolution or outcome to the parent(s)/guardian(s) who raised the Issue/concern.</p>
<p>Student / Volunteer-Related</p>	<p>Raise the issue/concern to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff responsible for the supervising the volunteer or student <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Director/designate <p>All issues or concerns about the conduct of: Staff, duty-parents, etc., that places a child's health, safety and well-being at risk should be reported to the supervisor as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.</p>	

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

LICENSING AND STANDARDS

The Ministry of Education licenses St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School. The *Child Care and Early Years Act 2014* set the standards for health and safety, fire protection and qualified staff and equipment.

The license permits enrollment of:

- Infant Program - 10 children ages 0-18 months
- Toddler Program – 14 children ages 18-30 months
- Nursery School Program-16 children ages 2.5-5 years (can be 20% of younger group)
- Pre-School Program - 24 children ages 2.5-5 years
- Kinder/School – 15 children ages 3.8-10 years

A Program Supervisor makes annual inspections from the Ministry of Education as well as a Fire Inspector and a Health Inspector from the Regional Health Unit. As of September 30, 1999 - licensed day nurseries are required to meet the standards outlined in the new CSA Standard, CSA Z614-98. Programs are required to develop a comprehensive playground policy that outlines the procedures that will maintain a safe outdoor play area. St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School's playground policy adheres to the required standards that ensure the outdoor play area is clean and safe at all times.

STAFF

The Executive Director of the Nursery School is a registered Early Childhood Educator and all staff are either Registered Early Childhood Educators or have related training and experience. All staff are certified in CPR/First Aid and have their vulnerable sector check. Our Staff are encouraged to continue their education through courses, workshops and conferences.

Registered Early Childhood Educators are members of the *College of Early Childhood Educators*, as members of this association; a Code of Ethics binds them. St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School offers learning opportunities for college students in the Early Childhood Education programs as well as high school students in the co-op programs. These students come to our program to gain experience in working with young children. Please see our policy for supervision of Volunteers and Students below.

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS POLICY

Intent:

- To help support the safety and well-being of children in licensed child care centres.
- To provide direction to child care centres regarding the supervision of volunteers and Placement students.
- To require childcare centres to develop and implement a policy for the supervision of volunteers and placement students in their centres.

Requirements:

- Prohibited Practice policies and procedures- to be reviewed with volunteers and students before they begin providing care, and annually thereafter. Signatures are required and kept for 2 years.
- A written procedure for monitoring Prohibited Practice practices is in place.
- Individual plans for children with anaphylaxis and the emergency procedures are reviewed prior to commencement of care, and annually thereafter.
- Criminal reference checks are required for all *volunteers*.
 - The centre has an “open-door” policy, so parents are considered guests/visitors when in the centre or when attending field trips.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

- Students are required to have criminal reference checks through community colleges and universities prior to commencing placement in child care centres. The vulnerable sector check needs to be performed within the last 5 years and offence declarations or attestations are documented every year after, no later than 15 days after the anniversary date of the more recent offence declaration or attestation if the person continues to provide such child care services.
- Our centre director is required to verify that personal who are employed by or contracted with outside organization (e.g.: special needs resource consultant, bus drivers, etc.) or individuals (a psychiatrist contracted with a parent) - have completed background screening prior to interacting with children in the program.
- A new criminal reference check is required before every fifth anniversary after the date of the most recent vulnerable reference check.
- Any person from whom volunteers or works with our centre is required to obtain a vulnerable sector check is required to provide the centre with an offence declaration, as soon as reasonably possible, any time he or she is convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada).

Policy Statements:

- No child will be supervised by a person less than 18 years of age.
- Only employees will have direct unsupervised access to children.
- Volunteers and students will not be counted in the staffing ratios.
- All volunteers and students will be required to read program policies and procedures and to sign an acknowledgement form.
- The expectations of volunteers and students are provided in detail in the personnel manual.
- The roles and responsibilities of the supervising staff are provided in detail in the personnel manual.
- The operator is required to review the policy annually.
- The operator shall ensure that the policy is reviewed with employees before they begin their employment and at least annually thereafter, and with volunteers or students who will be providing care or guidance at the centre before they begin providing that care or guidance and at least annually thereafter.

SCHOOL YEAR CLOSURES, HOLIDAYS & INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES

The school will be closed on the following days: Thanksgiving, Second Friday in November closed for the Church Bazaar set up (in our lease for closure), Christmas Break (closed between Christmas and New Years), Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday. Last business day of June for Summer prep. STTANS is always closed the last week of AUGUST for September prep. September school year typically begins following the Labor day long weekend.

Inclement weather: Our school may be closed due to severe weather conditions. Our staff will call and or email families. Our staff will also make the necessary arrangements to post school closures when applicable on our doors and as well as any or all sources of electronic media utilized by our school.

Infectious Disease Closure: Our school may be closed due to infectious diseases; this is to keep our centres ability to ensure the safety of the children, educators and families. COVID is only one of the possible pandemic that may effect our ability to be open.

REGISTRATION and WAITLIST POLICY

Space permitting, registration for the upcoming school year is ongoing.

Pre-registration is available to current parents in the program. The Nursery School holds an Open-House every spring when new parents can come and visit our school to ask questions and take information. Parents are required to register their children on the City of Ottawa Child Care Registry and Waitlist. After that, registration is ongoing throughout the year when spaces are available, we use the waitlist as a tool to offer spaces to children as they appear and need our service making special note to priority spaces when needed. All information on the waitlist is and remains confidential. Our Director of the program ensures to offer spaces in the program as per the priorities on the waitlist from #1 onward.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

REGISTRATION and WAITLIST POLICY CONTINUED

When registering their children with us, parents are responsible for completing a series of administrative forms. The Regional Health Department requires that all children enrolled in the program must have proof of up-to-date immunization. The Board of Directors reserves the right to cancel any program due to the insufficient enrollment. In addition, changes to admission to any of the Nursery School programs are at the discretion of the Board.

FEE POLICY AND REFUNDS

1. **Non-refundable-\$90.00 deposit** for full fee paying families is required to confirm your child's registration.
2. Childcare fees are set by the STTANS BOD.
3. Childcare fees are paid monthly by: Cheque, email transfer, Master Card or Visa and will be pre-arranged by the office at the time of enrollment. Full monthly fees are to be paid prior to the 10th of each month. Families can request a statement of their balance at any time. Families will be provided with a yearly tax receipt in February of the following year upon request. **Note:** There will be a **fee for NSF cheques of \$40.00**, payable in cash within a week's notice.
4. Families are charged for all days regardless of whether your child is in attendance or not. There are no reductions of fees for vacations, statutory holidays, illnesses or part-time days missed. Our fees are charged on a monthly basis rather than a daily rate, prorated for the year; some months have more days than others.
5. No refunds will be given if the Nursery School is closed due to unforeseen circumstances such as a utility failure, pandemic, severe weather conditions or natural disasters.
6. Transitions of children from one age group to the next are dependent upon the availability of space in the older age group. In the event that there is no space available for a child in the next age group the child will remain in their current age group until a space becomes available for the family to move up.
7. **One month's notice of withdrawal is required. In lieu of notice, one month's fees will be charged.**
8. Failure to pay your fees may result in withdrawal of your child. If you are having difficulty meeting fee obligations, please speak to the Director immediately.
9. If you have not paid your fees by the 10th of each month, a **\$40 late payment** will be charged to your child's monthly fees.

PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL

Should a parent choose to withdraw their child/children from a program, the Registrar must receive from the parent, a **one month in advance written notice along with payment for that month**, prior to the end of the program they wish to leave. The remaining post-dated cheques will be returned or destroyed. The program is not in a position to accept new student's into the program for the last 2 months of school and therefore, your fees will cover that tuition whether your child/ children are in attendance or not. All withdrawal notices are to be placed by April 1st, our non profit centre would not be able to enrol a new student after the end of March.

The Board of Directors upon recommendation of the Executive Director, reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a family from a program due to conflict/ s that may arise. A parent has the right to appeal this decision and must request, in writing, a meeting with the Board of Directors and the Teaching Staff.

PART-TIME FEES

In the event that families request a change from part-time to full time status, a written request must be submitted to the centre Director one month in advance. This request can only be granted if / when there is availability in the specific age group.

If you request a change from full time to part-time status, a written request must be submitted to the centre Director one month in advance. Part time will only be accommodated if the centre is able to provide a partner to share the remainder of the full time space. Families have the option of purchasing additional days if enrolment allows, and additional fees will be charged.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School will make every effort to accept and accommodate children with special needs into the program. St. Thomas works in collaboration with Children's Integration Support Services (upon approval of funding) in order to create a positive and supportive environment that meets the child's specific needs. Inclusion is very important to our program and educators.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

INTRODUCING YOUR CHILD TO THE PROGRAM

This may be your child's first experience in a group setting on their own. Children react differently to separating from their parent and/or caregiver. Our goal is to make your child's entry into the program as comfortable and positive as possible. The following suggestions may help the transition into the program for both you and your child.

1. Explore the environment together. Allow your child to hold your hand and walk around the rooms looking at the activities. As your child becomes more comfortable, begin to move away. If you station yourself in one area, your child will know where you are and will begin to explore from the secure base that you provide.
2. If your child would like to participate in an activity, join in if your company is requested.
3. Some children prefer to watch other children at play. In this case, sit down with your child and talk quietly about what you are seeing. Please do not pressure your child to join in. Participation will come when your child feels comfortable.
4. When your child appears happy and comfortable feel free to leave. Please say goodbye to your child and inform a educator that you are leaving.
5. Sometimes a child will cry for a few minutes after a parent leaves the room. If you are concerned about this, please wait in a nearby area where we can call you if necessary. The teachers are aware of and are sympathetic to separation anxiety and are willing to help guide you and your child.
6. Experience has taught us that starting school is less confusing if the children are phased in gradually. You will be notified in August when your child is to begin. Plan to spend some time integrating your child into the program, slowly if necessary. Some children will be fine if you leave after the first visit, others will need more time.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE / ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

The door for our preschool and toddler wing has a security code; the code will be given to parents after confirmation of attendance.

The Infant room also has a security code to their room which will be given to the enrolled parents after confirmation of enrollment.

Please notify the school before 9 a.m. if your child will not be attending school that day. A brief message can be left on the school's answering machine or emailed to the main email on the front of the handbook.

Parents are responsible for their own children until they leave them in the care of a educator. The child is considered to be the responsibility of the parent immediately after he/she is picked up from school. Furthermore, parents are responsible at all times for any child who accompanies them into the school and is not currently enrolled in the Nursery School program.

Please pick up your child on time. A child waiting after the other children have gone may cause your child to become upset. The staff also has additional duties to perform before they return to their own families. The teachers cannot release your child to a stranger. If someone unknown to the teachers is picking up your child, the school must be notified in writing and the person must provide picture I.D.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important part of the program planning in an Early Learning Program. They are designed to meet the children's developmental needs and to enhance the projects/activities which the children enjoy in their daily program.

The Child Care and Early Years Act requires programs to inform parents of all field trips in advance, to allow parent sufficient time to sign a consent form to permit their child/children to participate in each individual trip. The Child Care and Early Years Act is also very specific in its requirements of Child/Educator ratios, which thus dictates full participation in those field trips planned for the entire enrolment.

Should circumstances (i.e. health, etc.) prevent a child's participation in a field trip, it is the parent's responsibility to arrange alternate care. For field trips in which the entire group of children is to participate, it is impossible for the program to provide alternate care and still meet the Child Care and Early Years Act regulations. According to City of Ottawa guidelines, parents are charged fees on an enrolment basis, thus fees cannot be reimbursed for such days.

For field trips, transportation (if required) will be by chartered bus. Special permission for children to participate will be required on such occasions. **Children cannot be dropped off or picked up during the field trip.**

Mandatory – Police Check for volunteers

******Volunteers** – *Any individual who is engaged in the child care program and interacts with children in care, but is not paid by the license, is considered a volunteer.*

Examples of Volunteers who require a vulnerable sector check: *Parents assisting on an occasional or reoccurring basis with child care programming, such as excursions, field trips, etc.*

CHILD GUIDANCE and PROHIBITED PRACTICES

Educators work together to help the child develop his/her sense of self-discipline. The Educators recognize the importance of stressing the positive with children, redirecting them as much as possible. Limits are expressed clearly to the children with reasons and consequences.

Neither physical nor verbal punishments, withdrawal of love or affection are used to discipline the children. We ask you to respect these guidelines while in the program. The method of adult intervention used allows for decision-making and self-discipline on the part of the child resulting in a positive, rather than a negative, experience.

The goal of behaviour guidance strategies is to assist the children in developing self-control, self-confidence and respect in their interactions with others and the environment.

Preferred Behaviour Guidance Practices

Plan the Environment

The environment includes elements of space, time and materials.

When space is carefully planned children can work and play more comfortably and harmoniously. Space, which is aesthetically pleasing, ordered and organized, contributes to good mental health and diminishes potential problems.

Time

Schedules and routines serve as a framework from which children gain trust, security and order. In order to meet children's needs we must plan an appropriate balance between active and restful periods, individual and group activities, educator initiated and child initiated activities.

Materials

Ensure toys and materials are in good supply, are well organized and are age appropriate. This will help children to develop autonomy, to resolve problems with peers and to become involved in productive learning experiences.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

Verbal Guidance and Redirection

Focus on the behaviour, rather than the child. Use positive messages in a consistent manner. Set appropriate expectations for the developmental levels of the children. Channel the child's energy to another area.

Ignore inappropriate behaviour that is not dangerous. Provide frequent positive verbal reminders. Provide positive reinforcement of desired behaviours. Redirect a child who is not managing to a closely supervised activity. Discuss and explain all consequences of inappropriate behaviours.

Prevention

Staff needs to be aware of potential problems and work towards preventing difficulties before they arise. Establish close physical proximity when it appears that a child or group of children may be losing control. Position staff throughout the room or play yard so that all areas of the room or yard are visible.

Arrange furniture, toys and equipment so that lines of vision are left open. Personal chatter and business are not permitted while supervising children. Use the Buddy system for children leaving the rooms. No more than two children permitted to leave the room at one time. Personal safety will be discussed with the children on an ongoing basis.

Monitoring

1. Compliance and contravention is monitored closely and staff must sign off quarterly stating that they are adhering to policies and procedures.
2. All staff must read, date and sign all policies of the Centre as a condition of employment, and annually thereafter. Regular classroom, playground and field trip observations of staff, students and volunteers interacting with the children will be conducted by the Executive Director/Program Supervisor of the Centre. Observations are done on a daily/casual basis, with their awareness of the process. Meetings with individual staff are held to assist and support staff in developing critical reflection skills. The Executive Director/Program Supervisor will provide support to guide staff where necessary.
3. Staff evaluations take place within the first three to six months for every new employee and are conducted annually thereafter. All reviews are documented.
4. Collaborative inquiry practices are discussed at regularly scheduled staff and team meetings, and strategies developed together. This is a means to question theory and practice, discuss ideas, test theories, and share ideas. A written record is kept of all meetings.
5. All records related to the signing and reviews of policies will be retained at the Centre for a minimum of two years.

Prohibited Behaviour Guidance Practices

The following forms of behaviour guidance shall not be permitted by anyone including staff, students and parents during the operation of the program:

- 1) Corporal punishment (spanking, hitting, shaking, dragging, etc.)
- 2) Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself/herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

- 3) Locking the exits of the child care centre premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- 4) Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his/her self-respect, dignity or self-worth.
- 5) Deprivation of a child's basic needs such as food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- 6) Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Contravention of Behaviour Guidance Practices

All adults, while at the child care centre, are **required** to comply with the program's policies regarding Prohibited Practice and the requirements set out in the Child Care Early Years Act. Failure to comply with the Prohibited Practice policy may result in:

For Staff, Students and Volunteers: A verbal warning, a written warning, termination of placement for students and volunteers and termination of employment for staff.

For others, including parents: Verbal warning, other action deemed necessary by the child care centre Board including, but not limited to the person not being allowed on the premises.

The Director and Board of the childcare centre in determining which action is necessary may consider the following information:

- 1) The seriousness of the offense.
- 2) The risk, or harm, to the child.
- 3) The frequency of the occurrence.
- 4) Previous disciplinary action taken.

Where action is necessary it will be taken immediately by the Director of the centre in the case of staff, students and volunteers, parents and others, and by the Board in the case of the Director.

Review and Retention of Policies and Procedures

- 1) An orientation takes place for each new staff members, volunteers, and students. All program policies are discussed and signed at this time. All policies are reviewed annually.
- 2) Ongoing discussion of policy takes place throughout the year.
- 3) Complaints regarding behaviour guidance will be brought to the Director and investigated using the Contravention Procedure.
- 4) Serious Occurrence Procedures (M.Ed.) will be followed as necessary.
- 5) Records of behaviour guidance practices and performance evaluations will be kept in employee/ personnel files, for at least two years.
- 6) Reviewed annually by the Board of Directors or the Executive Director as designated by the Board of Directors to ensure it remains appropriate and up to date.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

SNACK and LUNCH TIME

The children have water, cheese, and a variety of fruit and various brands of crackers, baked goods etc for snack time twice per day.

Parents are invited to provide special snacks at any time during the school year, to help celebrate their child's birthday or any other special event. However, **all food brought to the school must be store bought and nut free.**

Lunch is provided by our on-site chef for a full-day Toddler/Preschool children and for PD days etc for Kinder/school age if a family requests it.

The menu is posted three weeks in advance on the Parent's Bulletin Board. The Ministry of Education, the agency responsible for licensing programs, and Ottawa-Carleton Regional Health Unit, oversee the menus.

Nutrition Policy

We have a legislated obligation to develop a policy on children's nutrition that is consistent with the Ministry's guidelines. STTANS provides morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack to our toddler and preschool programs. STTANS provides afternoon snack for our kinder/school age programs.

We cannot provide alternatives for special diets, allergies or intolerances.

All infants must bring lunches from home and should include a variety of foods from the following chart:

Food Groups	Amount Offered (attendance of 6 hours per day)
Milk and Milk Products	250 – 375 mls
Meat and Alternatives	60 – 90 mls
Breads and Cereals	450 mls or 2 ½ slices
Fruit and Vegetables	300 mls or 2 ½ whole fruit

All infant children bring their own bagged lunches from home. These should include morning snacks, lunch, afternoon snacks and milk or formula. The combination of Infant snacks and noon-time meals should be equivalent to the guidelines set out in the chart above. Staff are expected to be vigilant regarding the content of infant bag lunches and advise parents when there are concerns regarding the nutritional adequacy of the lunches. Please also pack lunches according to the policy of the Centre (i.e. peanut / nut restricted products) All children's lunches, snacks, bottles and cups need to be labeled. The Centre will routinely provide nutritious morning, afternoon snacks & lunch for our full-day preschool and toddler programs. The menu will consist of dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, whole grain crackers, a variety of fresh fruit, vegetables, protein etc

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

ALLERGY INFORMATION

Perfumes and scented products are common allergens. Some of the children and staff members are sensitive or allergic to these products. Parents should refrain from using colognes or perfumes before entering the school. Children should not wear scents in the school.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School enforces a *nut-free policy*. **Do not provide snacks that may contain nuts or nut products.** If your child has an allergy or intolerance, please be sure to speak to the director for the appropriate important forms and information to be filled out and shared. If your child has a allergy, intolerance or special diet, you are required to provide your child's food daily for all snacks and meals.

HEALTH AND MEDICATION

Health regulations state that a child with fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea may only attend school after being **symptom-free for 48 hours**. Please think of your child's sickness as this, if your child is not well enough to participate fully in the program (outside etc), your child is not well enough to be at school.

Upon arrival, children are checked for colds or other signs of illness. If they appear ill or become ill during school hours, a staff member will call the parent to pick up the child immediately.

Please report to the school if your child has a communicable disease such as chicken pox, head lice, conjunctivitis, and impetigo or has experienced vomiting or diarrhea.

MEDICATION

We are required by law to obtain written permission to administer prescription medication. If your child requires medication, forms must be completed with parent's signature.

All medication must be in an original container as supplied by a pharmacist. The container must be clearly labeled with the child's name, name of the medication, the dosage of the medication, date of purchase, an expiration date of medication and clear instruction for the administration and storage of the medication. All medication must include the possible side effects and treatment.

We store all medication in a locked, metal container in the fridge or cupboard, with the exception of EpiPens and inhalers.

Note: The responsibility for the administration of medication involves certain elements of risk. Unexpected consequences including, but not limited to illness, adverse reactions or other complications may occur as a result of the administration (or non-administration) of any medication. The physical reactions result from the medication and can occur without fault on either part of the student of STTANS or its employees or Board of Directors. By requesting and consenting to the administration of medication by STTANS to your child, you are assuming the right of an expected reaction occurring. It is understood that the chances of such a reaction may be reduced by carefully following the instructions provided by you and/or the pharmacy (as per physician's prescription) at all times. If you consent to the administration of the medication to your child by STTANS, you must understand that you, and not STTANS, bear sole responsibility for any physical reaction that might occur.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

CLOTHING AND BELONGINGS

Clothing for school should be simple, comfortable, washable and suitable for energetic and active play. Despite our art and water play aprons; the children may come home with occasional paint marks.

The children should have indoor and outdoor shoes at school at all times. The floors and equipment can be slippery so rubber-soled footwear is recommended. Slip-on shoes or Velcro-strap shoes are easier for the children to manage and encourage independence.

All children in all groups have outside play each day, weather permitting. Please ensure that your child is appropriately dressed with splash pants and/or snow pants, boots, mittens (no gloves), winter hat and a sunhat in the warmer weather. For safety reasons, please ensure that children do not wear scarves, mittens with strings or clothing that has dangling strings.

Label all clothing that comes to school with your child's name on it. Some children do not recognize their own clothing so please check that the clothes they are wearing are in fact their own. We discourage children from bringing their own toys and possessions to Nursery School unless specifically requested. Children often find it difficult to share their favorite toy from home and toys could get misplaced or damaged.

We encourage and teach the children to dress themselves. Please make sure your child's clothing and footwear is easy for them to put on and take off independently.

FIRE, SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

As per fire department regulations, fire drills are conducted with the children on a monthly basis.

In case of an emergency to your child, your child will be taken to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, on Smyth Road. Your signature on the Registration forms indicates your acceptance of this arrangement.

If it is necessary to vacate the building due to fire or other emergency, the children will be taken to Ellwood House, 2270 Braeside Ave. 613-521-5151. Parents will be notified via phone or email as soon as possible.

Our Nursery School has Emergency Management Policies and Procedures reviewed yearly by all staff and volunteers.

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Transportation to and from the school is the responsibility of the parents. Some parents may be interested in arranging carpools. Consult your insurance agent regarding adequate coverage when transporting children other than your own.

Parking for parents is permitted at the front and side of the church **only**. The parking lot on the East side of the building is private and is for the residents of Ellwood House. Stopping or parking **IS NOT PERMITTED** in this area.

Parking is also forbidden in areas expressly designated for the disabled except by permit.

St. Thomas the Apostle Nursery School - Parent Handbook

VOLUNTEERS

We welcome volunteers. All volunteers are legally required to obtain a criminal reference check. This can be done at your local police department for a minimum charge. You will need photo identification that has your name, date of birth and address. Parents are encouraged to do this before the school year begins as the process could take a long time depending on how busy the department is.

Parents are welcome to visit the school at any time. We encourage active participation in the program by parents and invite them to share customs or traditions. Parents may also assist in any of the school's planned activities, to demonstrate skills related to their hobbies or work, or to help with the various fundraising activities. At any time, Parents are welcome to sign up on the Volunteer list posted in the hall.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

The Nursery School distributes monthly newsletters and calendars. The newsletter informs the parents about the program and upcoming events. This information is emailed at the end of each month in order to save on the use of paper.

Those families who don't have email will find their newsletter in their mailbox. Please check your mailbox on a regular basis.

Daily information that needs to be relayed to the teachers can be written on the class attendance list. We have ongoing communication with parents via email, face to face as well as designated electronic ON-LINE platforms.

DONATIONS

The Nursery School welcomes donations from parents throughout the school year. Napkins, Crackers, Fruit, Cheese, kleenex etc are appreciated.

FUNDRAISING

Each year we actively fundraise to purchase items, which would benefit the children and are not covered by our regular budget. Understanding that parents have limited time, these fundraising events are kept to a minimum and are simple, fun and practical. If you have a fundraising idea or would like to coordinate an event please don't hesitate to contact the Director with your ideas. Fundraising activities always need a parent to coordinate them and we would appreciate your help in whatever capacity you are able.