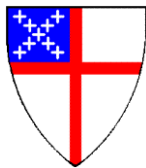


Ascension Episcopal Day School Parent Handbook



2016-2017



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Welcome to Ascension Episcopal Day School!

On behalf of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension we welcome you to Ascension Episcopal Day School. We are happy you have joined our school and honored to be a part of your child's journey of lifelong learning! We are committed to serving our students and families by providing the highest quality care and educational environment possible. This Parent Handbook has been prepared as a guide in order to further explain how we work together to provide this care. We appreciate your support and commitment to our program.

1. Our Mission

The mission of Ascension Episcopal Day School is to provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment where children can develop socially, emotionally, creatively, cognitively, physically, and spiritually. Drawing on Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and other best practices, our program is devoted to providing age appropriate experiences in an atmosphere of love and respect for every child.

2. Our Philosophy: Developing the Core of Individuality

Early childhood is a critical time in the development of individuality. It is the period in our life cycle when we are laying down the foundations for all our future interactions with the world. In this first stage of life, everything is novel. All of the sensory information that a young child is absorbing needs to be organized into meaningful information and experiences. Our neural networks and physical bodies are reacting to this new world and creating our first attempts to bring understanding to our surroundings.

This initial understanding of the world begins as newborns experience regular and consistent patterns to the sensory information they are receiving. Internally, babies are integrating this information and connecting it with physical responses. They learn to cry for help, smile, grasp, wiggle their legs, focus and track with their eyes, and eventually coordinate their movements enough to bring their fingers to their mouth. This is the beginning of the development of their core functions and capabilities which eventually leads to self-identity.

It is from this core that children are empowered to engage the world. We believe when children are treated with love, patience, and respect, they experience a deep sense of safety and they learn to explore the world from a powerful, secure core.

As children grow out of infancy, they begin to develop new levels of sophistication including their "executive functioning" skills. They begin to question, synthesize, evaluate, analyze, apply, explore, and comprehend information based on their interests and abilities. These are the basic categories of "executive thinking" that, when developed effectively, give children the cognitive and creative skills to engage the world at a high level.

Our role as early education teachers is to provide stimulating learning and play environments that facilitate the development of their executive functioning skills. We do this by exposing students to a wide variety of materials and activities based on their interests and level of development and by engaging them in dialogue using open-ended questions to elicit their ideas and their burgeoning language skills.

Children are also beginning to develop their first relationships with other people. To help them along this path, we work on building trusting and caring relationships between teachers and students. We model positive, effective communication methods and help them learn to successfully interact with both adults and peers.

In addition, we teach them how to be good “citizens” in the classroom by establishing appropriate rules and expectations for behavior. At Ascension, we view social conflicts and inappropriate behavior as learning opportunities. We teach the children how to reflect on their behavior and choices. Through discussions with both peers and teachers, they participate in developing the rules and expectations for themselves and their classroom. In this way, children develop their resiliency and the ability to “self-regulate” their behaviors and emotions, leading to strong and confident social skills.

We believe free choice is an important factor in the development confident and creative individuals. Consequently, we encourage students to explore materials and activities freely within appropriate limits. In this respect, we believe the role of the teacher is to facilitate and deepen children’s creative play and ideas. The goal is not to tell them what to do but to ask them about what they are doing. We are not as interested in the products of their creative and artistic endeavors as we are in the joy they experience in the process of creating. This free choice allows for self-paced development, facilitates positive self-image and reflection, and encourages a sense of personal responsibility and accomplishment.

Along with the development of cognitive, creative, and social skills, children are developing their physical skills. These skills are divided into two major categories: gross motor and fine motor. Gross motor skills are large muscle movements like running, jumping, climbing, and digging. Fine motor skills primarily involve hand-eye coordination and are practiced through activities like cutting, eating, puzzles, and writing. Both motor systems require the integration of multiple muscle and neuronal systems, along with the proprioceptive and vestibular systems, to create coordinated movements. Children need to be given ample daily opportunities both indoors and outside to practice these skills.

All of the skills mentioned above are encapsulated in early education under the idea of “teaching to the whole child.” Often what is left out of this concept is spirituality. As a Christian organization, we believe spiritual development is ultimately the most crucial component of the “whole child”. While we do not have a religiously-based curriculum, we talk about God and spiritual awareness, and we celebrate major Christian holidays. However, we embrace all religions and spiritual practices centered on love, compassion, and tolerance, and we encourage families to share their beliefs and traditions with us.

In summary, at Ascension we focus on helping children develop a secure “core” identity. We believe children master new skills best at their own pace. We strive to challenge children at the edge of what they have already mastered and what they have not yet learned. We do this by constantly assessing each child’s level of achievement and then offering new learning opportunities that meet their changing needs. We believe in using open-ended dialog with our students to support and challenge their ideas and ways of thinking. We believe that fostering self-confidence and independence in a warm, loving, and safe environment is crucial to developing competent and caring individuals.

3. Our Staff

Ascension is committed to recruiting and retaining a high quality staff. Lead Teachers are required to have, at minimum, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a closely related field, with at least two years' experience in an early childhood classroom. Teacher Assistants are also required to have experience in early education. All staff members participate in a continuous program of education and training in early education, health, and safety. Our goal in training is to implement best practices in early education and to remain aware of the ever-changing needs of today's families and the findings of current research. In addition, staff members are required to maintain current certification in infant, child, and adult CPR and First Aid.

All staff are certified by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children. The School is in compliance with Section §63.2-1724 of the Code of Virginia which requires two background checks for all staff.

In addition, staff members are considered "mandatory reporters" and are required by Section §63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. All staff members have been trained in mandatory abuse reporting requirements and the red flags of potential child abuse. They are also required to receive training in the Episcopal Diocese's "Safe Churches" program in order to better insure the safety of all our children.

4. Our Church

The Church of the Ascension is a Christian community committed to sharing the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ through worship, teaching, fellowship, outreach, and personal example. The congregation, Vestry, and clergy strive to live this vision, cherishing all they meet as beloved children of God.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

5. Organizational Framework

Ascension Episcopal Day School is an outreach mission of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. We are part of the Church and fall under their non-profit status with the State of Virginia as well as under the Church's governing bodies and direct supervision. The Church is governed by a group known as the Vestry, headed up by a Senior Warden. The Day School is governed by the Day School Board of Directors headed by the Chair of the Board. Additionally, the Rector of the Church serves as the supervisor of all Day School staff, including the school Director. The Director oversees the policies, staff, and day-to-day operations of the School. Our program is covered by The Church Insurance Company of Vermont.

6. Code Compliance and Standards

As a mission of the Church, AEDS is an early education school falling under the Department of Social Service's designation of "Religiously Exempt"; (section §63.2-1716 of the Code of Virginia). We are registered with and monitored by the Department of Social Services in this capacity and are held accountable for the "Religiously Exempt Child Day Centers" standards found at:

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/child_care/unlicensed/recdc/.

A common misconception is that “religiously exempt” means we are not held to any standards by the State because we are “exempt.” In fact, we are held to a wide range of strict standards under this classification. In addition, we are part of the State “Virginia Quality” STARS rating system. This rating system sets very high standards for early education centers in terms of school environment, curriculum, and teacher professionalism and interactions with students. In a nutshell, AEDS sets very high standards and we strive to constantly uphold, implement, and improve our standards.

7. Location and Hours/Days of Operation

The program is located in the educational wing of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, 405 Talbot Hall Road, Norfolk, VA 23505; telephone: (757) 351-0566. Our program currently serves a maximum of 61 children between six weeks through 6 years of age. We are open year-round Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

8. Holidays

The program is closed on the following dates:

2016-2017 Holiday Calendar

Monday, 9/5/16 Labor Day
Friday, 11/11/16 Veteran’s Day
Thursday 11/24/16 & Friday, 11/25/16 Thanksgiving Break
Thursday, 12/22/16 –Monday, 1/2/17 Christmas Break
Monday, 1/16/17 Martin Luther King Day
Thursday/Friday, 4/13/17-4/14/17 & Monday, 4/17/17 Easter Break
Monday, 5/29/17 Memorial Day
Tuesday, 7/4/17 Fourth of July
Monday, 8/7/17–Friday, 8/11/17 Staff Training Week (closed)

9. Waiting List Policy

Children are admitted to the School as spaces become available on a year-round basis. All families seeking enrollment must initiate the placement process by filling out a “Waiting List Application” form. The application process is free, and we highly recommend submitting this form as soon as parents believe they *might* want to enroll their child, as spaces are competitive. This includes parents who are currently expecting. For expecting parents, a desired start date can be estimated using the child’s due date, but please note that infants cannot start until they are 6 weeks old. Applicants must also schedule a tour with the Director to ensure that our school is a good match for your family.

Priority on the Waiting List is given based on the following order:

1. Siblings of currently enrolled students.
2. Parishioners and staff members.
3. New families submitting waiting list applications for two or more children.

When a space becomes available we will contact families on our Waiting List based, first on priority, and then on the date of each application. Through close monitoring of enrollment, we try to anticipate openings in our classrooms as far in advance as possible and communicate this with waiting list applicants.

Unfortunately, spaces are not always available when desired by families. Additionally, the exact date when a space opens up is not always easily predicted. For example, in the Infant Room, spaces most often become available when a student transitions to the Toddler Room. However, trying to predict when an infant will be ready for the Toddler Room is challenging. Therefore, when we offer a space to a family on the Waiting List, we may initially only give an approximate starting date until we are certain about when a space will be available.

Families on the waiting list **MUST** contact the school at least every four months to update their contact information or they may be removed from the waiting list. ***All families on the Waiting List, including families with highest priority, should have a backup plan in place in case they are unable to get into the school at the time of their desired start date.***

10. Admission

The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin, but reserves the right to exclude applicants whose needs exceed the School's ability to provide accommodation. In such cases, the School will make every effort to work with families to locate a more suitable child-care setting.

Upon acceptance to the School, each parent/guardian must submit a complete registration packet, current physical examination report, a copy of original birth certificate or hospital proof of birth letter, and immunization record for each child. If a biological parent is not authorized to pick up the child/children, the School must have court documents and custody papers on file. If a guardian is not the custodial parent of the child, court documents must accompany the registration form.

At the time of acceptance to the program, a \$150 non-refundable Acceptance Fee is due to guarantee a child's space. A visit by the child with the parents prior to the first day is required. Families will be able to meet the Lead Teacher and Director to go over School and classroom policies and to answer any questions.

11. Developmental Milestones and Classroom Enrollment

Because Ascension Day School is a year-round program, new student enrollment and current student transitions to new classrooms may occur at any time of the year as space permits. In order to succeed in the classroom, certain developmental milestones need to be reached. Age limitations related to State regulations must also be followed.

Developmental Milestones **necessary (bold)** or desired before beginning in a classroom:

- Infant Room: **must be 6 weeks old.**
- Toddler room: **1 year old, walking, self-feeding with minimal help, using Sippy cup: no bottles,** no breast milk, napping on schedule, no pacifiers.
- Preschool: **2 years old,** eats with spoon or fork, washes hands independently, beginning to put coat on independently, follows one-step directions.

- PreK3/4: **3 years old, potty training underway or nearly completed**, uses bathroom with minimal help, eats independently without a large mess, drinks from open cup, cleans up after meals and activities, can sit for 10 minutes at circle, mostly independently dresses/undresses including zippers, follows two-step directions, asks for help when needed, sleeps without pacifier at naptime.
- PreK4/5: Potty training completed, uses bathroom with minimal help, eats and drinks independently, cleans up after meals and activities, can sit and stay focused at circle, independently dresses/undresses including zippers, follows complex directions, able to sustain dialogue with teachers and friends.

12. Deposit

One month in advance of actual enrollment, parents must pay a deposit equivalent to half a month's tuition. Similar to a deposit for housing rental, the deposit will be held and applied to the child's last billing statement at AEDS upon receipt of one month's written notice of withdrawal. Families may pay the deposit in three monthly installments by agreement with the Director.

13. Tuition

Tuition is due monthly by the fifth (5th) of each month; with the exception being months where we are closed on the 5th, in which case tuition will be due in full by the first school day after the weekend or break. A late fee of \$25.00 per child enrolled will be charged every month for payments not received by closing time on the due date. These late fees are compounded for consecutive months of non-payment. For instance, families who have not paid in full for three months will be charged late fees of \$25 for the first month, \$50 for the second month of non-payment, and \$75 for a total of \$150. Full tuition must be paid for each month of enrollment, regardless of attendance, family vacation, or center closings due to inclement weather. The monthly tuition rates are calculated taking holidays and the staff training week into account. A \$25.00 fee will be charged for all returned checks.

Parents entering or leaving the program mid-month shall have their tuition prorated at a per diem rate. Note: attendance for 20 days in any month is considered full-time and will not be prorated.

If payments are late, a notice will be issued to the parent within one week stating that payment is due in full plus late fees. If payment is not received by Friday on the third week of the month, the family may be dismissed from the program. Families requiring an alternate payment schedule may arrange this only by a formal, dated written agreement with the Director.

14. Re-registration Fee

A \$50 Re-registration Fee is charged to all students currently in the program who are returning for another school year (September through August). It is due by May 6th. This fee is waived for students who have paid the Acceptance Fee between January 1st, and May 6th, of the same year.

15. After 6:00 PM Late Fee

The center closes at 6:00 PM. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute is charged with a minimum charge of \$5.00. In case of a late pick up without notice, the other parent and/or the emergency contacts listed on your registration form will be contacted. If the parent/guardian or emergency contact persons are not available after 30 minutes with no communication from the family, Social Services will be contacted for instructions. ***Families who continue to arrive late after two warnings may be dismissed from the program.***

16. Withdrawal and Termination

A month's written withdrawal notice must be given to the Director. Parents failing to provide proper notice will forfeit their deposit. In the event of an unforeseeable family emergency or financial crisis, a request may be made in writing for a deposit refund which will be reviewed by the Board of Directors. All fees and tuition payments must be current.

The School may terminate a child's attendance for falsification of record information, non-payment, excessive absenteeism (5 or more days of absence per month for 3 months), or failure of a parent or guardian to comply with school policies or procedures.

An early education center can be a wonderful place for children to learn appropriate social skills; however, not all young children thrive in a group environment. If a child repeatedly displays inappropriate, dangerous, or destructive behaviors or shows signs of acute and chronic stress, the parents will be notified. If, after attempts to help the child acclimate to the school, these behaviors/signs of stress do not improve, the child may be excused from the program with the hope that a more suitable situation for that individual child may be found. If a child has multiple severe or dangerous behavior incidents and poses a potential threat to the other children in the classroom, this child may be excused without the standard one month notification.

In situations where a child is displaying consistently challenging behaviors, the following procedures will be used:

- The Lead Teacher will document the child's behavior.
- The Lead Teacher will discuss the behavior with the Director.
- The child's parents will be informed and strategies will be implemented to address the behavior.
- If the behavior persists, the Director will hold a conference with the parents and Lead Teacher to develop a detailed plan promoting appropriate social/emotional skills.
- Outside sources will be consulted if necessary and possible.
- If, after reasonable efforts have been made with the child and family to resolve issues, no progress is observable, then the child may be excused from the program.

17. Scholarships

The School offers a limited number of scholarships based on income or hardship. Applications are available from the School office.

18. Welcome Packet, Parent Orientation, and Open House

Approximately one month before entering the program, or when transferring to a new classroom, the Lead Teacher will send families a welcome packet. This packet will contain specific information about the new classroom and forms for your child's new class.

Every September, the School will hold an evening parent orientation to discuss the Parent Handbook, goals and objectives for the year, and other pertinent information. At least one parent from families new to the school is ***required to attend***. A second mandatory parent orientation may be held in March at the Director's discretion for families starting after the September meeting.

19. Parental Involvement

We consider it a privilege to be such an important part of the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the children in our school. We strongly believe that the healthy growth and development of the children enrolled in our program requires frequent and close communication between parents and teachers. We will make every effort to communicate important things that happen with your child at school; please try to keep us informed about important things happening at home as they may affect your child at school as well.

There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in the school and parents are encouraged to participate in school events to help establish a close, positive, and open relationship between the children's home lives and their lives at school. Parents can attend holiday celebrations and special events like orientation/open house, parent chats, and graduation. Parents can become involved in our Parent Association or School Board and associated sub-committees. Parents can volunteer to help with technology, social media, school "community days," fundraising, or can organize informal get-togethers/playdates with other families. You will also be invited to church events like our children's services, holiday services, and social gatherings.

Parents are welcome to visit at any time during our hours of operation. If you wish to visit your child's classroom, please arrange a convenient time with your child's Lead Teacher. Parents may visit just to observe, but you may also arrange a time to nurse your baby, or to discuss jobs or hobbies, or to do a planned activity with the students. Please keep in mind that young children can become upset, overexcited, or possessive when a parent is in the classroom. Additionally, too many parents in one classroom or too many visits may also be difficult for children and may disrupt the routines of the classroom. If this is a problem, the Lead Teacher may discuss appropriate times and ways for you to visit.

20. Parent Association

Ascension Day School has a Parent Association (PA) that meets regularly throughout the school year. The PA responsibilities include yearly fundraising events, hosting talks on relevant issues such as children's health and nutrition, and organizing social gatherings, playdates, and teacher appreciation gifts. A "Room Mother" is appointed for each classroom on a volunteer basis..

21. Communication

There are many ways in which the school communicates with parents:

- **Emails:** The Director will email families about important information regarding the school, including upcoming meetings and celebrations, outbreaks of illnesses, weather closings, issues or questions related to specific families or students, and periodic newsletters.
- **Website:** <http://ascension-norfolk.org/ascension-day-school/>
- **Facebook and other social media:** the school has two Facebook sites, one secure site for invited families only and a public site. We are continuing to investigate social media and how to use this appropriately and effectively for the school.
- **Daily reports:** families will receive daily reports from their classroom teacher.
- **The Parent Association and Room Parent:** families will receive communications directly from the Parent Association and classroom “Room Parent”.
- **Texting and Calls from Classroom Teachers:** Teachers will contact parents directly as needed. Every classroom sets its own guidelines as to the appropriate level of direct communication. Please be aware that when teachers are communicating by phone, they are being pulled away from their attention on the room. Teachers will respond when there is an appropriate opportunity.
- **Formal and Informal Talks:** Lead Teachers hold two formal parent conferences per year. Additionally, teachers are available for short discussions at drop-off and pick-up. If longer discussions are needed, please arrange a time through your Lead Teacher.
- **Parent Orientation and Open House:** these are held a minimum of once a year in the fall.

PROGRAM AND CLASSROOMS

22. Curriculum

The curriculum at Ascension Day School is comprised of the best characteristics of several related approaches to early education. We are most heavily influenced by the Reggio-Emilia system but we also pull many ideas from Montessori and what are currently considered “best practices” in the United States. In particular, our “American System” of early education is based on the following principles:

- **We use a “play based” approach:** “play based” simply means that all of our learning activities and materials are designed to be engaging and fun for young children while also offering intentional learning objectives.
- **We maintain consistent routines and daily schedules:** children need predictability and structure. Having set routines and schedules helps children to reliably understand and anticipate their daily lives. Well planned schedules also minimize waiting times between activities. At the same time, we allow for flexibility in our schedules to allow children extra time at an activity, and during transitions, if needed.
- **We offer a wide variety of daily activity centers with large blocks of time for students to freely choose and explore activities:** activity centers may include writing tables, a math

center, science discovery centers, an art center, dramatic play, a reading area, blocks, puzzles, and “manipulatives” (small construction activities like Legos).

- We organize our activities and learning objectives around themes with one or more daily projects based on the theme: teachers will organize activities around classic themes like dinosaurs, seasons, weather, “all about our bodies”, sea life, and habitats, but will also develop themes based on the interests expressed by students. Themes will last from one week to several weeks and may be extended based on the interests of the students.
- We follow the interests of the students: while we use teacher-directed themes to organize activities, we also pay close attention to the expressed interests of the students and provide materials and support to allow them to explore their own projects and ideas at their own pace.
- We continually assess individual progress and provide learning materials that support each child’s level of development: in the education field this is referred to as supporting “differentiated learning.”
- We use open ended dialogue and questions with students to challenge, support, and deepen their thinking and creativity: open-ended dialogue uses a lot of questions that begin with “why,” “how,” and “what,” and are directed towards encouraging students to explain, elaborate, and analyze their ideas.
- We focus on children’s creative processes and not their artistic products: we encourage children to freely explore materials and activities, and we support their creativity by playing with them and talking to them about the art work and ideas. While we talk positively about their artwork, we minimize praise for their products.
- We organize activities around groups of varying sizes throughout the day: group activities range from “morning meeting” where the whole class will meet to read books, sing, and talk about the day, to “project tables” where a small group will work on individual or collaborative projects; to one-on-one activities between the teacher and a student.
- We believe in talking with children about their spirituality: while we do not have a religiously-based curriculum, we talk about God’s presence in their lives, and we support a gospel of love for all people and, kindness, tolerance, and care for the world.
- We Celebrate Diversity: we believe diversity is a positive force in the world, and we embrace all cultural and religious traditions and encourage families to share their traditions with the school.
- We follow the “101 Principles of Positive Discipline” as our guideline for teaching social/emotional skills: these guidelines were developed at ODU and revolve around the complementary concepts of recognizing and supporting positive behaviors, while using social conflicts and inappropriate behavior as learning opportunities.
- We use the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) to define quality in our classrooms and the school as a whole, and to identify needed areas of improvement: ERS is a nationally recognized rating system that defines high quality early education environments including health, safety, learning opportunities, and the quality of the staff.
- We use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to define the quality of teacher-student interactions and to identify needed areas of improvement: The CLASS system rates

teachers' emotional support for students as well as organization of the classroom and instructional support.

- We work on “school readiness” to ensure our students are prepared for the challenges awaiting them after leaving Ascension: we have developed relationships with nearby elementary schools and we meet with them to discuss ways to best prepare our students for school after Ascension.

Students spend approximately a year or more in each classroom. However, our curriculum is designed so that students will continue to be challenged in all of their developmental and learning needs for as long as they stay in a classroom. This is possible because we continually assess our students and offer them new learning opportunities and materials as their level of development increases. ***Every classroom is designed to meet the learning needs of every student on a continuous basis.***

23. Daily Schedule

The daily schedule at Ascension varies for each class but generally consists of alternating quiet and active periods. It includes self-directed play at activity centers, organized group activities, morning and afternoon meetings (“circle times”), projects related to a theme, naptime, and meals. All classrooms (except the infant room) have two outdoor/gross motor periods scheduled during the day.

The infant room does not follow a set schedule. Each infant’s daily schedule is individualized “by demand.” Parents and infant teachers work as a team to set up each child’s schedule. Parents will be given guidelines to follow in order to help the infant room successfully manage eight different baby schedules. Teachers will collect daily information from parents about their child’s routines, behaviors, and abilities. This information will help teachers to set up a comfortable routine for each child that minimizes any stress from transitions between home and school. While we encourage daily outdoor time for the infants, the opportunities will vary as schedules and weather allow.

24. Arrival

Arrival begins at 7:00. ***Families are not allowed entry to the building before this time.*** This early morning time is designed as a period that gives your child the opportunity to settle into the class day before circle time and directed activities begin. Arrival is also the time teachers have to help transition students into the school day and briefly talk with parents. Students love this early free play time and it helps them release some of their morning energy and settle into the day. Because of the highly organized schedule for each day, ***students are required to arrive by 9:30 at the latest.*** Arrivals after this time are disruptive to the classroom and make implementation of daily learning objectives difficult. Exceptions to this are doctor’s appointments. Please bring a note from the doctor explaining the late arrival. Parents must call and/or email the school before 9:30 a.m. when a student will be absent for any reason.

Front Door Security

The primary entrance/exit from the Day School is the Church office entrance facing the parking lot (it has a small portico and cross over it.) This entrance has a security lock. Parties not affiliated with the church or school must be buzzed in by the Day School Director or the Church Secretary. Parents, staff members, and other parties associated with the church will be issued a personal,

numeric password (PIN) to enter the building. Specific directions for using the security PIN will be given to families upon acceptance into the program. The PIN will allow parents to clock their child into and out of the program, giving the Director an accurate attendance list for emergency purposes. The door will remain locked during the school's hours of operation except during times when a large event is occurring. **Please do not allow anyone other than your family to enter into the building under any circumstances.** If someone tries to gain entrance into the building while you are going through the door, you may tell them you are not authorized to let them in and they must use the buzzer next to the security pad. Inform them that office personnel will assist them promptly. In cases where a stranger seems intent on entering the building with you, please do not enter the building. You can communicate with staff through the outside classroom entrance doors, (the side doors along the education wing), or return to your car and call the school or church for assistance. **If you observe any strange or suspicious person attempting or successfully entering the building without authorization please inform the staff immediately.**

One of the church's missions is the Food Pantry. Operating on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, the Food Pantry is an extension of the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and serves families in need who have a referral from social services. During these hours, volunteers running the Food Pantry will control food recipients' entrance into the building and escort them to the Church lounge where they are served. Parents should not allow food recipients entrance, and recipients will not be allowed unsupervised admittance.

Classroom Sign-In and Out

In addition to the front door security PIN system, parents shall also sign their child in and out on the "Sign-In/Out" clipboard which stays with each classroom as they transition between indoors and outside. Parents will indicate on the log the person anticipated to pick up their child at the end of the day.

Washing Hands and Dropping Off

When arriving for the day, all students must immediately wash their hands before participating in any activities. Parents should also wash their hands. After washing hands, dropping-off your child should be a short but reassuring and loving ritual. When parents linger, young children quickly learn that fussing and crying will get parents to stay. The longer parents stay, the more children will cry, and the harder it will be for them to transition into the school day. When parents leave, children learn to calm themselves and start engaging in the fun and play.

Daily Health Observations

As part of the arrival process, teachers are trained to quickly and informally assess the general health of your child. This "Daily Health Observation" is required by the State. Daily health assessments may take no more than a few seconds for a child that appears healthy, or it may require several questions and minutes if a child appears to have symptoms of illness. Children that are assessed as being too sick to remain at school will be asked to leave until the illness resolves. Please refer to the Health and Safety section below for more information on illnesses.

Infant Room

After washing your child's hands upon arrival, parents will place all bottles in the appropriate basket in the refrigerator and all baby food in the child's basket (see Food and Mealtime Policies below). Parents will fill out the side portion of their child's "Daily Activity Report" (DAR), relaying pertinent information that may affect their child's schedule (in addition to any verbal communication with the teacher). Such information may include general health, suspected illnesses,

rashes, bumps and bruises, amounts of sleep, behavioral changes, food intake, bowel movements, or important incidents or accidents. The DAR is given to parents at the end of the day sharing important information on feedings, elimination, length of naps, special happenings, and stimulating activities. Please refer to the infant welcome packet provided by the Lead Teacher for details.

Toddler - PreK Rooms

After washing your child's hands, please place all food and drinks in the appropriate baskets in your child's classroom or class refrigerator (see Food and Mealtime Policies below). Parents must communicate pertinent information that may affect their child's school day such as general health of their child, suspected illnesses, rashes, bumps and bruises, amounts of sleep, behavioral changes, food intake, bowel movements, or important incidents or accidents. At the end of the day parents will receive a "Daily Activity Report" (DAR). The DAR for older children will be more generalized than for younger children but may include individualized information on your child's physical well-being and developmental milestones. Please refer to the classroom welcome packet and information sheets provided by the Lead Teacher for details.

25. Departure

All children must be signed out on the "Sign-In/Out" clipboard by the person picking up. Any person other than the parent/guardian picking up a child/children must be at least 18 years old, present a valid photo identification, and be listed on the child's registration form as an authorized person. Parents may add to (or subtract from) their authorized pick-up list by dating and signing a note and handing it into the school office. Please inform authorized persons picking up your child to ***always*** bring a photo id. Note that by law, we are not allowed to release children to anyone who appears to be inebriated or otherwise unable to safely drive their vehicle.

While we encourage opportunities for parents to talk with teachers and assistants, for safety's sake we discourage lengthy conversations with classroom staff at departure. Staff members are monitoring families coming and going while continuing to supervise the remaining children and engage in activities with them. If you need to hold a lengthy conversation, please find a mutually agreeable time to have a meeting with the staff member you seek.

26. Outdoor Play

Ascension believes that outdoor time is essential for the growth and development of children. Children are encouraged to interact with natural materials outside, including digging in the sandbox and garden. We also have water play at times. Our students will get their clothes dirty! Please realize this is part of our curriculum and children should not wear clothes that are too nice to get soiled.

Students are taken outside twice a day for a minimum of 30 - 45 minutes at a time. This outdoor time is subject to weather conditions. Children will always have access to water when outside and will be reminded to drink regularly. When weather does not permit outdoor play, every attempt will be made to have indoor gross motor time. Children will not go out in any rain conditions.

Ascension closely monitors both the Heat Index and the Wind Chill. For a Heat Index of 85-95 degrees outside time will be limited to short periods. Children will not go out when the Index is 96 or greater. For a Wind Chill of 35 degrees and higher, children will go out. Please bring clothes appropriate for the conditions.

27. Personal Items in the School

Cubbies are provided to each child for storing changes of clothing and other supplies. Hooks are provided for jackets and bags. ***Please clearly label all personal items including clothes*** – mix-ups can occur. Please do not send toys for use in the classroom. Our rooms are well equipped and sharing personal belongings is difficult for young children. The exceptions to this rule are items that relate to the current learning theme—something that they would like to bring to share as “show and tell.” In addition, while we do not generally encourage soothing toys and items (except in the infant room), if a student is unable to settle into the classroom, please discuss these special items with your Lead Teacher.

28. Enrichment Classes

Ascension provides enrichment classes for all students at no additional cost (age limitations may apply). These classes may include dance, sports, art, science, chapel, and music.

The School also works with outside companies to provide private classes to students during school hours. Ascension attempts to ensure all students wanting to take a private class are included, however, sign-up is through the individual companies and the School does not control the process or collect payments.

29. Student Assessments and Parent Conferences

Students are assessed on their social-emotional development, motor skills, and cognitive development on a continual basis. At least two formal, written assessments are completed each year in the fall and spring. After each formal assessment is completed, Lead Teachers will hold parent conferences to discuss the results and any issues, questions, or concerns. Teachers concerned about a child’s progression in any area of development will complete additional assessments as needed and inform parents if the results warrant further action. Parents with concerns about their child’s development are encouraged to discuss this with the Lead Teacher.

30. Celebrations

Many celebrations are held during the school year. Some are school-wide celebrations and others are done by each classroom. Most of the school-wide celebrations fall on Christian holidays. However, Ascension respects all religions and we encourage families to share their traditions and beliefs with us.

Birthdays are celebrated in the classrooms and parents can discuss appropriate treats with their child’s Lead Teacher. Treats are optional. Please remember we are a nut-free school. Parents wishing to distribute invitations for birthday parties occurring outside of school must include an invitation to all the students the child’s class.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

31. Sick Child and Infection Control Policies

It is inevitable that children will get sick, no matter where they are. As children begin to have contact with the world outside that of their own families, they come into contact with germs and bacteria that are foreign to their bodies. This is the way they build immunities. We cannot, nor would we want to, shield a child completely from the outside world. If we did, the natural immunities a child gains through contact with others would not develop and a simple cold could become a serious illness.

We do, however, want to protect our students from an unusually high exposure to germs all at once. For this reason, the Day School staff will take constant precautions to prevent the spread of illness. Many common childhood illnesses are contagious. They are spread by germs that may be transmitted in several ways. Most illnesses, including respiratory tract infections, are spread through direct contact, as well as through coughs, sneezes, and runny noses. Careful hand washing by the staff and the children can eliminate approximately 75 percent of the risk of spreading the illnesses. Other precautions include separating sick children from those who are well, taking extra precautions with diapered or toilet-training children, and working to maintain sanitary conditions throughout the Center. Keeping staff and parents updated on any contagious illnesses that have been diagnosed in the school can also help limit their spread.

Ascension is not licensed to care for sick children as defined by the State Board of Health. We understand that young children often have minor illnesses like colds with running noses. In such cases where children are otherwise active and happy, exclusion from school is not required. But when children are truly sick, not only can germs spread, but a staff member is required to attend to the sick child to the exclusion of other students. You, the parents, can help us in our efforts to keep all our students healthy and safe. We ask your cooperation in the following ways:

1. Please notify the School as soon as possible if your child or any member of your immediate household has developed any illness. At a minimum, notify the School by 9:30 am if your child is sick and will not be attending the Center for that day.
2. Life threatening diseases must be reported to the School immediately.
3. **Children with special health care needs will be required to provide a written action plan with a doctor's signature in place in order to attend school.**
4. Even parents who are health care professionals must get a diagnosis from their pediatrician—not from a family member.
5. If your child shows any of the following symptoms while at school, you will be called and asked to immediately pick up your child. Please help us protect the other children by responding promptly (within one hour of a phone call). If your child has any of the following symptoms at home, we ask that you keep him or her out of the School until 24 hours after the symptoms are gone (***including all of the following full school day***) or until your physician says, in writing, that it is all right to return:
 - A. ***Fever -101 degrees (or higher):***
 - Child with a fever of 101 degrees or higher may not attend until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications and if sent home due to a fever, including all of the following school day.

B. Vomiting:

- Child who has vomited before arriving at the center may not attend that day.
- Parents will be called to pick-up a child if he or she has vomited one or more times in a course of the day.
 - Occasionally children will vomit for reasons unrelated to an illness. At the sole discretion of the Director, a child who vomits once with no other apparent symptoms may be allowed to stay at school. Two or more incidents will require immediate pick up.
 - Spit ups will be at the Lead Teacher and Director's discretion and depend on the volume, manner of spitting up, color/consistency and frequency.
- Child may not return until they have ceased to vomit for 24 hours and if sent home due to vomiting for at least the following full school day.

C. Diarrhea:

- Child with diarrhea may not attend.
- Parents will be called to pick-up their child if he/she has an excessive number (two or more) of loose, watery stools during the course of the day, or if teachers are unable to contain the feces.
- Child may not return until the diarrhea has ceased for 24 hours and if sent home due to diarrhea for at least the following full school day.
- Consideration may be made if diarrhea is a result of an antibiotic currently being taken or changes in diet at the discretion of the Director.

D. Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):

- Tears, swelling, redness of eyelid lining, discharge of pus.
- Child with pink eye may not attend unless they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours and if sent home due to pink eye for at least the following full school day.
- Parents will be called to pick-up their child if unusual drainage, pus, or unusual redness of the eye is reported.

E. Severe Coughing

- Child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds; gets blue in the face.

F. Difficult or rapid breathing

G. Yellowish skin or eyes

H. Sore throat or trouble swallowing

- Child may not attend with Strep Throat until they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours and if sent home for at least the following full school day.

I. Infected skin patches, open sores, unusual, spreading rashes

J. Crusty, yellow, dry, or gummy areas of the skin – possibly accompanied by fever

K. Unusually dark, tea-colored urine – especially with a fever

L. Severe itching of body or scalp

M. A communicable disease – as listed on the Department of Health's current communicable disease chart

N. Low energy, malaise, severely cranky, loss of appetite, or falling asleep such that the child is not participating and one staff member is required to attend to a child

O. Head Lice:

- Once treated the child may return to school.
- All parents will be notified. Staff and parents will check children for the next 7-10 days.

Children must be fever and symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the Center, including all of the following day.

If your child appears cranky or less active than usual, is having trouble sleeping, eating, or staying awake and active, cries more than usual, or just seems generally unwell at home, you are asked to look for any of the above symptoms and to inform the child's teacher so that your child can be watched carefully for the worsening of symptoms. It is imperative that we all work together to keep the children who attend Ascension as healthy and happy as possible. We thank you for your cooperation.

32. Medication Authorization and Administering Medications

All medications, herbal remedies, ointments, lotions, sunscreens, and insect repellants require, at a minimum, written parental permission before these items can be administered to a child. Ascension Day School uses one permission form for all such items called the "Written Medication Consent Form." A separate "Written Medication Consent Form" form must be filled out for every such item. This form can be found online at:

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/recdc/intro_page/current_providers/forms/032-05-0098-00-eng.pdf, (also available in each classroom or at our website).

Every "Written Medication Consent Form" must be updated at least every year (half-year for infants under the age of one). The School will also accept the "Request for Administration of Medication In Hampton Roads Schools" form when submitted by a parent from their doctor. However, the School will not disperse this form to parents.

Necessary medications will be administered to children only by staff members who have successfully completed Medication Administration Training and only with proper written authorization from the parent and doctor (if necessary). Prescription medications, and over-the-counter medications given for 10 days or more, will not be administered without a consent form signed by the prescribing physician. Please contact the Director concerning any questions about medication forms and required signatures. Note: all herbal remedies/medications require a doctor's signed consent form.

The medication consent form may not be written to administer any medication "as needed." Specific times or symptoms which would necessitate administering the medication must be written on the form. The proper dosage must be written on the consent form and must match the prescription. Medications requiring a doctor's recommendation for dosage must be signed by a doctor (most commonly for over-the-counter medications for infants and toddlers).

All medications must be in the original unopened container with a legible label and labeled with the child's first and last name. Prescription medications must have the original pharmacy label. Tools used in the administration of a medicine, such as dosing spoons, oral syringes, and medicine cups must be provided by parents and shall not be shared between children. These tools must be labeled with the child's first and last names.

Staff will record the times that a medication is administered on the child's daily sheet as well as on a "Log of Medication Administration" form filed in the school office. Medications will be stored in a cabinet inaccessible to children or in the kitchen refrigerator. **PLEASE PERSONALLY HAND ALL MEDICATIONS TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER - DO NOT LEAVE MEDICATIONS IN BAGS, CUBBIES, OR COUNTERTOPS.**

Ascension Day School will not administer any medications for the purpose of treating a child's fever. The School will not administer ANY non-prescription cough or cold medicine to children under the age of 2 years, or ANY non-prescription antihistamine, even with a doctor's written instructions. Exceptions will be made for children whose pediatricians have listed an antihistamine as part of their Allergy Action Plan.

Please take medications home when not in use; however, medications should not go back and forth between home and school. Pharmacies can split medications into two separate containers. Medicines will be checked monthly, and those without a current authorization form will be returned to the parent or after 15 days from notifying parents, they will be discarded.

33. Diaper Cream, Lotions, and Bug Spray

All diaper creams, lotions, sunscreens, and insect repellants require written parental permission using the Medication Consent Form (see Medication Authorization above). As long as there is no medication in the product, they do not require a doctor's signature. Parents must supply these products, clearly labeled with the child's name. Staff will record the times that these products are applied on a daily log sheet. On sunny and warm days, when students will be outside, parents are encouraged to apply bug spray and sun lotion before coming to school or upon arrival. Teachers will reapply when going outside later in the day.

34. Food, Nutrition, and Meals

Mealtime is a very important part of early childhood education. At Ascension, we have the opportunity to help children develop healthy eating habits that will last them a lifetime. Nutritious meals are not only crucial for a healthy life, they also promote better learning experiences and brain development.

Should a child in our care have a food allergy, all parents may be asked to avoid sending that food to school, and food allergy protocols will be established for each classroom and the school as a whole.

All food and drinks for every child must be labeled with the child's name, date and time to be served (am snack, lunch, pm snack). Lead Teachers will give reminders/guidance to parents on appropriate food choices and preparation when needed.

When temperatures are 80° and above, children will be offered water at frequent and regular intervals. Please remember to supply drinks/liquids for all meals and extra for the summer.

Infants Meals:

- Infants will be fed on demand unless parents provide other written instructions.
- Parents are to supply enough prepared, bottled formula or breast milk for one day plus a back-up supply to be kept at the center.
- Bottles must be labeled with the child's full name and the date.
- Glass bottles are not permitted.

- Baby food from a jar shall be unopened.
- All food must be labeled with name and date.
- Food not consumed by an infant may be refrigerated and used later in the same day, otherwise it will be discarded or returned to the parents at the end of the day.
- While breast feeding mothers are welcome to visit for feedings, please keep in mind that we feed infants on demand and infants may have trouble settling into a consistent routine at school. If your infant is having trouble setting into routines, the Lead Teacher will discuss feeding plan alternatives with you. We offer a private space for breastfeeding mothers.

Toddler Through PreK Meals:

- Parents are responsible for sending two age-appropriate healthy, nutritious snacks and lunch plus drinks.
- Snacks ***must*** consist of items from two different food groups (fruit/vegetable, dairy, or grain).
- **Everything must be cut to safe, thin bite sizes to avoid choking.**
- Lunch ***must*** include a protein item as well as a healthy variety of ***at least two*** other food groups (fruit/vegetable, dairy, or grain).
- Please monitor the amount of food you are supplying and adjust as your child's needs and eating habits/preferences change. Make sure to send enough food—too much food is better than too little—however an overabundance of food can be daunting and cause children to not eat.
- Children have favorites but will also want variety. When your child stops eating a particular food item, please stop sending it.
- Sweets are not considered a food group and do not count—including items such as pudding.
- Drinks are milk (or non-nut based milk substitute) or water (no juice).
- Food will generally not be cooked or heated at school.
- Please no glass containers.
- All food must be labeled, dated, and stored in the refrigerator in each child's assigned food tray or space.

Foods that are potential choking hazards will not be served. These foods include, but are not limited to, candy, jelly beans, hot dogs (unless cooked, cut lengthwise in quarters, then sliced), popcorn, raw carrots or celery (unless cut lengthwise in quarters, then sliced), whole grapes or grape tomatoes (these can be halved, grapes should be seedless).

When considering food choices please remember that even if your child is a proficient “chewer” of these foods, the child sitting next to him or her may not be and could try a bite of your child's food.

- Mealtime should be a relaxing and social time.
- Children are encouraged to eat but NOT forced.
- Children are not fed by a teacher and are encouraged to use utensils (except infants and toddlers learning to use a spoon).
- Food is presented to the children in a very positive and matter-of-fact manner.
- Spilling and dropping are accepted as accidents. Children are taught how to manage and avoid accidents, but not blamed and not made to feel guilty for accidents.
- Making a mess is expected from our youngest learners.

- Children are neither bribed nor rewarded for eating.
- Teachers encourage "early finishers" to remain at the table for a while so that their playing early does not trigger a general rush to finish.

In the event that a balanced nutritional diet is not being provided, the Director will provide the parents with nutritional guidelines and/or refer them to a nutritional specialist for further guidance. It is our responsibility as care providers to ensure that the children in our care are getting a well-balanced diet.

35. Naptime

Naptime is part of the daily schedule. In the Infant Room the nap schedule is "by demand." Babies generally stay awake from 1-4 hours depending on their age among other factors. In the Toddler through PreK3/4 classrooms, naptimes are approximately 12:30 to 3:00. Children still sleeping at 3:00 PM will be allowed to awaken and join group activities at their own pace. If a child sleeps more than 3 hours they will be checked for any signs of illness or distress and may be gently wakened at that point. In the PreK4/5 classroom students rest or nap from about 1:30 to 3:00.

Parents supply a blanket for nap time labeled with the child's name (or sleep sack/swaddler for infants). These items should remain at the center and will be washed weekly. Fulltime children are assigned individual cots for their exclusive use. Children enrolled part-time may share a cot; however, these cots will be sterilized and given clean sheets daily between children.

36. Injuries and Accidents

All minor accidents (small cuts, bruises, scrapes, etc.) will be documented on an "Incident Report Form" which parents will review and sign at the end of the day.

For accidents requiring medical attention, parents will be notified immediately and arrangements will be made for the child to be picked up by the parent for transportation to a medical facility.

In case of emergency requiring a rescue squad, parents will be notified of the injury and to what facility the child is being transported. Once an ambulance arrives, an injured or ill child must leave in the ambulance.

37. Emergency Plans

Our center has an emergency preparedness plan that includes emergency evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures. These are available for review in the Director's office. If an emergency occurs, all parents will be notified as soon as possible by phone and email. Parents must then immediately pick up their children at a designated area. A fire drill is held monthly, and emergency preparedness plans are reviewed by staff on a regular basis.

38. What to Wear

Ascension is dedicated to giving our students highly interactive, engaged experiences. We encourage students to interact with the material and activities presented to the fullest extent. This means that they need to be properly attired for our learning environment. The following guidelines

will help your child to fully engage in the learning environment at Ascension:

- Clothes will become messy. Please do not dress your child in clothes that will cause you or your child to become upset if they should get soiled from paint, food, or dirt.
- Make sure that clothes fit. Clothes that are too big or too little are equally obstructive to play and learning.
- Dress for the weather conditions. Shorts and t-shirts are good summer clothes and layered warm clothes for the winter.
- Foot attire should be closed-toe year-round. Feet need to be protected!
- Always bring a full change of clothes and extra wear as needed which may be left in your child's cubby.

39. Weather Closings

In the event of inclement weather, the Director will decide, with the advice of the Board, whether to open or close the Day School. In addition to checking the local TV station website announcements (www.wavy.com), it is recommended that parents check their e-mail, text messages and/or call the Day School to verify if we are open.

40. Parking Lot Safety

Parking is allowed in any designated spaces except no parking is ever allowed in the handicap parking spaces without a handicap sticker. Please drive with extreme caution at all times in the parking lot. The speed limit is 5 mph. ***For safety reasons, we require that you not leave your car running unattended (by an adult) in the parking lot.***