



SPNDS

“LEARNING JOY”

PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised 2024

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Welcome

Welcome to the Swarthmore Presbyterian Nursery Day School (SPNDS) family! We have been serving the children and families in Swarthmore and nearby communities for 70 years.

SPNDS was established in 1952 by Mimi Dickson and Joe Bishop, a minister at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church (SPC) at the time. Forty-five children were admitted, and nine staff members were hired. Over the years our commitment to children and their families has remained the same: to provide a place where “children can grow to be whole and happy persons – proud of themselves and respectful of others.” SPNDS is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and has been continually accredited by the organization since 1998. We are also licensed as a childcare facility by the State of Pennsylvania.

The school is a non-religious program of the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church. Policies that apply to the day-to-day working of the Nursery Day School are determined by the Nursery School Director and supported by the work of the SPNDS Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is composed of 12 to 15 people, at least two of whom are members of Swarthmore Presbyterian Church. Three committee members represent specific groups: SPC Session, SPC staff, and Swarthmore College. The other members are parents: the two parent representatives for the current school year, and if possible, a parent who is a lawyer, one who has experience in finance and one who is a pediatrician. The Director of SPNDS and a staff representative are non-voting members of the Advisory Committee. Each member serves a two-year term; new members are selected by the Advisory Committee. They meet five-six times a year: August, October, December/January, March, and June. Subcommittees may meet as needed.

In addition to supporting the Director, the advisory committee is tasked with planning fundraisers and organizing special events for parents and families. They can also serve as liaisons to the Advisory committee, the Director and/or the church as the need arises.

School Philosophy: "Learning Joy"

Swarthmore Presbyterian Nursery Day School offers young children a happy and purposeful group experience. In doing so, we work in partnership with families in nurturing each child's development outside the home. While our school maintains a close relationship with Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, it has educational autonomy. The school is inclusive: children and teachers of all races and religions are welcome. Students with physical disabilities and/or developmental disabilities are accepted if SPNDS can meet their needs. An inclusive admissions policy enables children to understand and respect all people.

We see the child as a whole, developing being. All areas of development – social, emotional, cognitive, and physical – are of equal concern. The aim of our school is to help children express their individuality while learning to respect the rights of others. We want to help them understand themselves and their needs, but also to develop a sense of what it takes to be a successful participant in a group: awareness of the needs of others and of the group itself.

Our teachers design their curriculum with the knowledge that children learn most and best from taking an active role in the process. Thus, much of what is provided allows the child to manipulate, discover, experience, and create. The teacher guides this process by planning an environment based on the varied interests and developmental levels of each child in the class, and by being a source of support and information. Through continual observation and assessment, our teachers provide feedback to parents about all aspects of their child's development.

Outdoor play is an important part of our program. The play spaces, climbers, wheel toys, and building materials are designed to develop a wide range of gross motor skills. We view the playground, where children interact with a multi-age group, as another opportunity for children to experiment with and test their social skills. More structured sports and games are available as developmentally appropriate.

In addition to being exposed to new ways to foster developmental domains, our children learn to adjust to different adult personalities as they interact with special teachers for art, music, creative movement, science, woodshop, library – and with college students who are learning to observe and teach young children. They gain experience and knowledge from these teachers and learn to behave appropriately in different situations.

Our school has a long history of including children with learning, emotional, or physical disabilities. We strive to provide a positive learning environment in which the capabilities and unique gifts of each child are fostered and appreciated. We encourage understanding of the balance between the rights and responsibilities of each member of a group.

We realize that parents entrust their children to us at an early age. In response to this trust, staff members endeavor to create a supportive atmosphere respectful of children's feelings, needs and concerns. We respect the integrity of each family with its own patterns and preferences. We are most successful when the family shares their needs, dreams, and concerns directly with our teachers. Honest completion of our family survey at the end of the year helps us review the year and informs our ongoing program improvement process.

Our hope for the children is that they will grow to be happy, relaxed, self-confident people who are eager to learn and practice *learning joy*.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Admissions, Tuition and Parent/Teacher Relations

Accreditation/ Licensure: SPNDS is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). SPNDS strives to meet or exceed all the NAEYC standards and criteria for high quality programs. SPNDS is also licensed as a childcare center by The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services

Admissions Policy: Admission, the provision of services, and referrals of families shall be made without regard to race, gender, religion, disability, national origin, immigration status, preferred home language, gender identity or sexual orientation, marital status, or family structure. Efforts are made to include children with special challenges when we can meet their developmental needs. At registration time, tours are given by the Director or administrative assistant. Admissions for the academic year begin in February; preference is extended to families of currently enrolled children and to alumni families. To attend SPNDS' Preschool program, children must be three (3) years-old by September 1st of the fall of desired entrance, and they must be toilet-trained. Children in our Play Pals program must be two (2) years old by September 1st. No exceptions will be made to our cut-off dates.

Enrollment: SPNDS must receive your signed contract by the date stated in your welcome email to hold your spot for the following year. Additional enrollment forms are available in the Spring on our website and in the SPNDS office. Enrollment and medical forms must also be received by the summer deadline to hold your spot for the following year. DHS regulation now requires Emergency Contact forms to be reviewed by parents after 6 months.

Tuition Payments: Tuition can be paid in full before the school year begins or divided into 10 equal payments. Installment payments are due on the 15th of each month beginning in August and ending in May. Our preferred method of receiving payments is through our Brightwheel App. Parents can set up automatic payments in Brightwheel or pay each month. Checks will still be accepted and can either be sent in your child's folder, by mail, or automatically through your bank. We appreciate your promptness. If financial difficulties arise that make it difficult for you to make your tuition payment on time, please call the Director to make alternate arrangements. Scholarships are given to children whose families demonstrate financial need. To apply for a scholarship, parents are asked to complete an application and provide supporting documentation, which is kept strictly confidential. In late spring, the Scholarship Sub-Committee, comprising the SPNDS Director and the President and Treasurer of the Advisory Committee, meets and awards scholarships based on the relative need of applicants and available funding. If there is space and a child is admitted after the deadline, the scholarship committee will reconvene to determine eligibility and award. We raise money for our scholarship fund through school fundraisers and private donations. We appreciate your participation in and support of these events and drives. (Federal Tax ID Number: 23-135-2491)

Delinquent Tuition Policy:

- 1-30 days late: Brightwheel messages and an email reminder to the family
- 31-45 days late: first written notification of delinquency
- 46-60 days late: second written notification, indicating course of action to be taken
- 60+ days late: letter from the Advisory Committee; if no response, small claims court proceedings.

The Director has the discretion to use and/or amend the policy as necessary, including removal of the child from school.

Confidentiality Policy: All sensitive information concerning children, families and staff is considered private and confidential. All child files, assessments, health forms, notes from parents or professionals, etc. are kept in the locked school office. No one other than a child's teachers and the director may look at them except with parental permission. Similarly, we do not accept any information about children from third parties without parent permission.

Assessment: Our teachers bring years of experience with them and assess children based on their experience, observations and known milestones for child development. We have developed checklists of age-appropriate milestones in the domains of Social/Emotional, Language/Communication, Cognitive and Physical Development that help guide reports prepared for parents twice a year. The milestones align with the guidance published by the CDC, but we do not conduct formal normed assessments. Using our observations of your child in the classroom, and our knowledge of child development, the teachers prepare reports for families that can help you understand your child in the context of the classroom and help us plan and develop learning experiences

for your child. A review of the reports can also help us with program planning and improvements. If you have specific concerns about your child, we can assist you in finding professionals who are trained to administer more formal assessments.

Exclusion and Suspension Policy: SPNDS is committed to working with our families to prevent expulsion or exclusion of any child. Our policy is detailed more thoroughly in our Policies and Procedures document, but some conditions under which a decision to suspend or expel will be considered include but are not limited to the following: Parent/Family Member uses abusive language or threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members or another SPNDS family; Child's behavior is a risk to the safety of him/herself or others; Failure to comply with medical/immunization requirements; Documented habitual tardiness when picking up child; Nonpayment of tuition; Failure to comply with SPNDS policies. This policy is aligned with, and implementation will comply with, all state and federal civil rights laws.

Contacting SPNDS: The best way to reach us during the school day is through the Brightwheel app. This can be used to send messages to the director, your child's teacher, or to let us know about an absence or a change in arrival or pick up for the day. Phone messages and emails may also be used but may not be returned until the end of the school day.

Parent/Teacher Conferences: Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher or the Director via email or phone to discuss any concerns they may have. In-person parent-teacher conferences are held in January or February, and at that time, recommendations for the child's placement for the following year are discussed. Throughout the year, teachers will keep parents informed of classroom news using the Brightwheel app, emails, and newsletters. Additional meetings with your child's teacher or the Director may be scheduled as necessary. Please note that parent/teacher discussions are confidential, and teachers are discouraged from discussing children on the playground or any public area.

Parent Involvement and Visits: Parents have long been welcomed into the classroom at SPNDS. Each year we invite families to attend several activities including: "putter day," (August), preschool orientation, opening day parent meet and greet, Halloween hat parade, class holiday parties, outdoor family picnic and art show (May), and our Kindergarten graduations. Our SPNDS Parent Committee also organizes events throughout the year such as our SPNDS Parent Night Out. Families are welcome to celebrate their child's birthday with their class and should contact their teacher directly to make arrangements. We are always looking for parent volunteers throughout the year, please look for our volunteer sign up at orientation and back-to-school night!

Typical School Year and Day

School Year and Hours of Operation: Our typical school year begins in early September and ends in late May. During the school year, the school opens at 8:15 a.m. to welcome our Early Bird students and closes at 3:30 p.m. at the end of our Stay & Play program. The school is closed from June through late August, though the Director and Administrative Assistant will be checking emails and voicemails periodically. Your child's teacher will send home a more detailed schedule once classes are assigned for the year.

Typical Day in Nursery Day School (NDS) and AM Kindergarten Complement	
8:15-9:00 a.m.	Early Bird arrival (for those enrolled)
9:00-9:30 a.m.	Outside play or Art Room activity
9:30-11:30 a.m.	Indoor activities will include circle time, choice/play time, story, and a special (Art, Music, Science, Library, Woodshop).
11:30-11:45 a.m.	Outside play, NDS pickup
11:45 – 12:10 p.m.	Complement Students eat lunch
12:10 – 12:30 p.m.	Outdoor play and pickup by WSSD buses

Typical Afternoon in Extended Day (“Lunch Bunch”)	
11:50-12:15 p.m.	Outside Play
12:15-12:25 p.m.	Bathroom/Handwashing
12:25-12:50 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-1:20 p.m.	Quiet Time or Nap
1:20-2:20 p.m.	Activities: Guided Free Play, Games, Art, Music
2:20-2:30 p.m.	Circle time
2:30-2:45 p.m.	Outside Play
2:45-3:30 p.m.	Stay & Play program (for those enrolled)

Typical Afternoon in PM Kindergarten Complement	
11:45-12:10 p.m.	Arrival of WSSD buses and outdoor play
12:10-12:40 p.m.	Lunch
12:40-1:30 p.m.	Circle Time and Special (Art, Music, Soccer, Woodshop)
1:30-2:30 p.m.	Choice/ Playtime, Story time
2:30-2:45 p.m.	Outside Play
2:45-3:30 p.m.	Stay & Play program (for those enrolled)

SPNDS Health, Safety and Weather Policies and Procedures

Illness: Children who have vomited, had diarrhea, or had a fever may **not** return to school until **at least 24 hours after** they are symptom-free without fever reduction medicine. We also request that children who seem ill remain at home. Parents should send a message on Brightwheel to notify staff of an absence due to illness on the first day that their child is symptomatic. If your child develops symptoms of illness while at school, a parent or guardian will be called to pick their child up. Please see Addendum B for a list of symptoms that may suggest illness.

Medication: SPNDS does not administer over-the-counter medications, and these medications may not be sent to school in your child’s schoolbag. We will administer emergency medications as directed by your doctor. These medications will be held in the SPNDS office and must be accompanied by a signed action plan or instructions, a special care form, and a medication log. These forms are available on our website or in the SPNDS office.

Immunizations: All students must submit a current health form with their vaccination record before the start of each school year. We also request that students receive Covid-19 vaccinations.

First Aid/Accident Procedures: All Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Emergency cards for each child are on file in the office, individual classrooms, and with Lunch Bunch staff. They convey vital information about parents’ wishes in case of accidents and emergencies.

Injuries will be handled by SPNDS staff as follows:

- **Serious falls / loss of consciousness:** Staff will monitor child and, if necessary, administer CPR and dial 911.

- Abrasions and Cuts: wash with soap, water, and bandage.
- Splinters: attempt to remove, wash and bandage.
- Bumps and Bites: examine for breaks in the skin, wash with soap and water, bandage if open wound, and apply cold pack.

An accident report will be sent home for injuries. Parents will be notified in case of severe injury: e.g., possible broken bones, cuts that may require sutures, or head trauma. *Parent(s) will make the decision about consulting a medical professional if further treatment is deemed necessary in a non-emergency.*

Sunscreen Application: Please apply sunscreen to your child in the morning on warm days. If your child stays for an extended day, please complete the Sunscreen permission form available on our website.

Fire Safety/Emergency Plans: Fire drills are held monthly. “Shelter in place” procedures are practiced with staff and rehearsed in a child-friendly manner. If there is ever a need for real evacuation, we will use our emergency contact forms to reach families. Please read the emergency plan available on our website. A more complete plan is available near the main office and teacher mailboxes near the Play Pals room.

Release of Children: Children are not to be released to anyone other than a parent or a pickup person designated on their emergency contact form. If someone new needs to pick up your child, please send a message on the Brightwheel app. Any new pickup person will be asked to show their ID when they arrive.

Playground: SPNDS is committed to maximizing every child’s outdoor playtime. Our playground is open whenever possible, including during snowy weather conditions. Because of space, strict adherence to teacher-to-child ratios, and liability, our playground is for the use of SPNDS students and staff only during school hours. The playground will be closed to children when outdoor conditions threaten health and safety. During colder months, a “Real Feel” temperature of 25 degrees is used as a guideline when deciding whether the children can play outdoors comfortably and safely. Please dress your child for outdoor play.

Arrival/Dismissal Procedures: During the 9:00am drop off, three staff members unload cars. They will remove each child from his or her car seat and walk them to the gate to check in with the teacher managing attendance. If you would not like to use the car line or your child requires your assistance at drop off, please park in the side lot (entrance closer to Chester Road), walk your child to the gate, and check them in with the attendance teacher. Three staff members will also load cars in the car line during dismissal. “Bench time” is called at 11:40 a.m. for NDS students and at 2:40 p.m. for Lunch Bunchers and Afternoon Kindergarten students. Children will remain seated on the benches while waiting to be picked up. On rainy days, children are dismissed from the art room. Please drive up to the main school entrance and your child will be escorted to your car by a staff member. NDS pick up is at 11:45 a.m.; Lunch Bunch pick up is at 2:45 p.m. We ask that you please be prompt when dropping off and picking up your child. **Please note that children are not permitted to exit the playground gates without an adult.** If you are not using the carline, please walk all the way into the play space and make sure your child is checked out before you take them home. We also ask that if you arrive to the carline early, please do not let your car idle unless it is required to maintain air temperature inside the car. We would like to minimize the exhaust circulating on the playground. For more detailed information, please see our Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy on our website and posted inside SPNDS.

Inclement Weather / Announcement of School Closings, Delayed Openings and Early Dismissals: If school is closed, delayed, or dismissing early in the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District (WSSD, #460), SPNDS will follow suit. When the weather is inclement, please use the following methods to stay informed of any changes to our schedule:

1. WSSD website: Notices will be posted on the home page by 5:45 a.m. www.wssd.org
2. Radio: KYW 1060 AM (School #460)
3. Television: NBC 10 (School #460)
4. SPNDS email blast – please check and make sure that @swarthmorepres.org is recognized as a safe sender.
5. Brightwheel and Facebook messages

The Director retains the authority to close SPNDS regardless of the school district schedule if safety is a concern. In this situation, the last three methods would be activated.

SPNDS MODIFIED 2-HOUR DELAY SCHEDULE	
10:15 a.m.	Early Birds start
11:00 a.m.	NDS and AM Kindergarten Complement begin
12:00 p.m.	NDS Dismissal, Lunch Bunch begins
	<i>12:35 p.m. PM Kindergarten Comp buses arrive from WSSD elementary school</i>
	<i>1:15 p.m. AM Kindergarten Comp buses pick up for WSSD elementary school</i>
2:45 p.m.	Lunch Bunch and PM Kindergarten Complement dismissal
3:30 p.m.	Stay & Play dismissal

Student Attire, Snacks and Celebrations

Dress for School: We believe that if children are well enough to be in school, they are well enough to be outside, weather permitting. Our playground can be a chilly, windy place, so please ensure your child has appropriate clothing and shoes, all of which are labelled with their name (Layers work well!) When there is snow on the ground, children must wear snow pants and boots to be allowed to play in the snow. We ask that all students have a spare set of clothing to keep at SPNDS in the event of wet clothing or accidents. (Lunch Bunchers are asked to bring in a separate set just for the extended day program, as well.) Only closed-toed shoes please, and we recommend sneakers for running, climbing and bike riding. Please send a bike helmet labeled with your child's name that can be left at school. Children will not be permitted to ride bikes without a helmet or to share helmets.

School Bags: We ask preschool children to bring a school bag each day that they can easily open and close.

Snacks and Lunch: Due to the number of special dietary concerns and allergies, we ask that each child bring their own light, healthy snack each day and a water bottle. We always have a supply of crackers and pretzels should a child forget their snack, and we are happy to refill water bottles. Children who stay for lunch bunch also bring their own lunch and drink. Please do not send candy, gum, or soda for lunch or snack. Please avoid choking hazards (for example, grapes need to be cut in half and hot dogs need to be cut lengthwise). Please do not send glass containers. Water bottles and lunch boxes must be labelled with the child's name. For food safety reasons, we refrigerate all lunchboxes once they arrive at school, and discard all perishable food after lunch.

Birthday Celebrations: We love to celebrate at SPNDS! Special birthday treats and parent visits should be prearranged with your child's classroom teacher.

Holiday Celebrations: We celebrate many holidays in individual classrooms. Teachers will reach out to families with plans for their classroom. Please make sure you complete our child information sheet so your child's teacher knows which holidays your family celebrates. Please also let your child's teacher know if you have a special tradition you would like to share with your child's class.

****A Note about food allergies:** Food allergies should be noted on your child's medical form and special care form. Restrictions on what food can be sent to school will be made as required by the needs of the children enrolled each year.

Addendum A: NAEYC

SPNDS has long been accredited by the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).

SPNDS through the reaccreditation process every five years. Many of our policies and procedures have developed directly as part of the regular program improvement process built into the accreditation system. Links below are included for your reference.



<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-naeyc-program-standards>

Developmentally Appropriate Practice:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/developmentally-appropriate-practice>

Ethical Conduct

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/ethical-conduct>

Position Statement: NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

Preamble

NAEYC recognizes that those who work with young children face many daily decisions that have moral and ethical implications. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgement of an individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education.

The primary focus of the Code is on daily practice with children and their families in programs for children from birth through 8 years of age, such as infant/toddler programs, preschool and prekindergarten programs, childcare centers, hospital and child life settings, family childcare homes, kindergartens, and primary classrooms. When the issues involve young children, then these provisions also apply to specialists who do not work directly with children, including program administrators, parent educators, early childhood adult educators, and officials with responsibility for program monitoring and licensing.

Core values

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, *community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of everyone (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

* The term culture includes ethnicity, racial identity, economic level, family structure, language, and religious and political beliefs, which profoundly influence each child's development and relationship to the world.

Addendum B: Symptoms of Illness

- New onset of cough (or a change in the baseline cough for those with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough)
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of smell or taste
- Fever (measured to be 100.4 F orally assessed or higher OR febrile to the touch)
- Chills
- Rigors (shaking chills)
- Myalgia (achy muscles)
- Sore throat
- Nausea and/or Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Congestion/Runny nose
- Headache

Addendum C: Link to Childcare Regulations

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Child-Care/Pages/Child-Care-Regulations.aspx>