

**St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School**

192 Summer St

Somerville, MA 02143

617.666.9116

[www.sttheresaschoolsomerville.com](http://www.sttheresaschoolsomerville.com)

**Family Handbook  
for  
Early Childhood Program  
2024-2025**

Please note that this is a supplement to the main  
**Parent-Student Handbook**

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## **Introduction to the Program:**

### **Philosophy of Program**

The objective and purpose of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School is to provide quality and enriching childcare services to children 2.9-5. Our curriculum is based on fostering developmental skills while promoting the arts, early childhood literacy, science/discovery experiences, and creative expression. The primary philosophy of this center is that children learn best through active learning play.

This center is structured to provide a variety of play opportunities in the areas of Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Language Arts, Dramatic Play, Discovery Play, Expressive Arts, and Cognitive Learning Play. At our center the child is given many choices for free play as well as teacher directed play. Social/Emotional development and building skills that support healthy growth in this area are present in every classroom every day. All activities are planned with the age of the child and their developmental milestones in mind. Integration of enrichment activities in the areas of Art, Music, and Discovery centers are part of the everyday play experiences for a child in our program.

### **Statement of Ownership**

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School is incorporated by the Secretary of State of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School is solely owned and operated by Sts. Louis and Zelle Martin Parish, within the Archdiocese of Boston. **Please note that the parent-student handbook of the school supersedes any conflicting policies in this handbook.** This Handbook is intended as a guide. The language used in this Handbook should not be construed as establishing a contract of any kind, express or implied.

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### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School does not discriminate against children and their families or employees based on their race, cultural heritage, national origin, marital status, religion, political beliefs, disability, military status or sexual orientation. Toilet training ability is not a requirement for enrolling your child at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School.

### **Enrolling your Child**

1. Parent/Guardian does a virtual or phone call session and tours the school at a mutually agreed upon time.
2. Parent/Guardian enrolls online using the FACTS admissions system for paperwork and payment information.
3. During the school year, children should do a half-day classroom visit.
4. Child begins at our program. We will develop a transition plan of part-time to full-time as needed.

As part of our online registration process, we will seek information about each child/family's interests and needs through a developmental questionnaire. This developmental/Medical questionnaire will be updated annually through the online registration link and kept in the child's enrollment folder. To support transitions and coordinate with services offered by other providers/agencies, we request that Parent/Guardians fill out a "consent for information form" to best meet your child's need for therapeutic, educational, social and support services.

### **Family Involvement**

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School strongly encourages Parents/Guardians to be actively involved at the center. Parents/Guardians are always welcome to come to the center at any time to stay and play or read a book with the class, as coordinated with staff. We recognize that Parents/Guardians may have more questions for their child's teacher than the often-busy drop-off or pick-up time will allow. We encourage Parent/Guardians to set up a time to meet so we can give undivided attention to answer your questions and discuss your child's care. Parents/Guardians are also offered a time to meet with their child's teachers to discuss his/her development and progress twice during the year. In addition, we also offer several opportunities for Parent/Guardians to spend time at our center: Open House Night, Parent/Guardian Workshops, and End of the Year Celebrations.

Teachers use RenWeb, Facebook, and email to communicate with Parents/Guardians each day about the events, projects, and curriculum from the day. Pictures from the day may also be added. Parents/Guardians may communicate directly with your child's teacher through this application. Please let your child's teacher know if you do not wish your child to be in group pictures.

## Sample Daily Schedule

Arrival – 8:30am	Free Play
8:30-9:00am	Morning Meeting Time
9:00-9:30am	Playtime at Centers
9:30-10:00am	Bathroom and Wash Hands Morning Snack time
10:00-10:45am	Circle, songs, books, calendar, weather
10:45-11:30am	Playtime at Centers Group Games and Activity
11:30-1:00pm	Bathroom and Wash Hands Recess (Outdoors) Lunch
1:00-2:30pm	Rest time
2:30-3:00pm	Bathroom and Wash Hands Packup
3:00pm	School Dismissal
3:00-6:00pm	Aftercare Available

Play centers are set up in each classroom and may include Expressive Art, Listening Center, Dramatic Play Center, Block Area, Water or Sand Play, Math Manipulative, Language Arts Activity, Science and Discovery Table, Library and Cognitive Learning Games. Center activities are changed frequently to give the children a wide variety of choices, experiences, and enjoyable play opportunities.

### **Each Child should have at the Center Every Day:**

- A change of clothes that remains at the center until used, then replaced the next day the child attends the center. If your child is potty training, please be sure to bring more than one change in case of accidents.
- A blanket or small stuffed animal for rest time. All these items should fit in the child's backpack to be left in the cubby for the week. Please do not send in a pillow for your child.
- A “ready to serve” lunch (if the child is bringing lunch), a water bottle and 2 snacks brought in each day in a labeled lunch box. Please send a thermos for hot foods and cut up food in bite sized pieces. If your child is getting school lunch, please let your teacher know.
- Coat or sweatshirt for outside play on cool weather days.
- Hat for warm weather days.
- Hat, mittens, or boots for cold, snowy days.

### **Snack, Lunches and Drinks**

A “ready to serve” lunch, if the child is bringing lunch, plastic water bottle with water, and 2 snacks brought in each day in a labeled lunch box. Please send a thermos for hot foods and cut up food in bite sized pieces. If your child is getting school lunch, please let your teacher know.

### **Nut Free Center**

We are a Nut free center. As such, all snacks served to the children are free from nut substances. Parents/Guardians, please remember this when packing your child's lunch. The families of the children who have this severe allergy to nuts greatly appreciate your attention to this matter. Children who have any food allergies will only be served food from their lunch box that Parent/Guardian provides each day.

### **Lunch time**

Parents/Guardians can send in snacks and lunch each day for their child. The amount of food you pack should depend on how much your child normally eats and how active your child is. Ice packs will be needed to keep lunches cold. Thermoses should be used to keep their lunch hot. Please do not send in canned food, fruit snacks or gummy snacks, or junk food (candy, chips, soda, gum, etc. ...) for lunches or a snack. All food needs to be ready to serve to the child from the lunchbox. Milk will be provided for a drink at lunchtime for students participating in the lunch program. Please read our brochure for tips on preventing choking in children and prepare food accordingly.

If you need suggestions for healthy lunch items, please refer to the following list or speak with your child's teacher for additional suggestions:

- Sandwiches
- Cut up meats and cheeses
- Yogurt
- Leftover dinners in a thermos
- Crackers and cheese
- Fresh fruit or fruit cup

**If your child has any food allergies or develops them, please notify your child's teacher.**

Children with food allergies will be served only food that is packed in their lunchbox from home for both snacks and meals. See our Health Care Policy for more information on Food Allergies.

If you prefer your child to have an alternate type of Milk (not an allergy situation) than what we provide, we ask that you send it in a thermos cup that the child can keep in their lunchbox. Thank you.

**Toilet Learning**

When the Parent/Guardian lets us know that potty training is going well at home it is time to also start potty training here. Occasionally, a child may initiate this while at the center while seeing other children on their way to the potty. Staff will inform Parent/Guardians that the child seems to be showing some interest in beginning potty training. Potty training is an individual achievement. Some children master this quite young, before 2 years, and others are over three years old before the habit is established.

Please, dress the child in sweatpants, shorts, or easy to pull down pants without a lot of buckles, belts, or snaps. If you choose to send in pull-ups for your child, make sure they are the "Velcro attached at the sides" kind. Please let your child's teacher know if you need additional resources in this area.

**Tuition Information :**

Families are financially responsible for tuition payments. Repeated late payments may be cause for dismissal from the school.

**Tuition Payment Plans**

Tuition costs are set yearly. Tuition payment is through FACTS Tuition Management Program where the tuition is electronically deducted from a checking or savings account. Tuition is due the 5th or 20th of the month beginning in June. Tuition payment options are:

1. One payment in full at the time of registration
2. Two payments - July and January
3. Three payments - in July, October, and January

4. Ten payments – July through April

Any family having difficulty meeting tuition payments must speak to the school office personnel and Principal.

### **Registration Fee**

Each family is obligated to pay a non-refundable registration fee.

### **FACTS Enrollment Fee and/or Grant and Aid Fee**

Families are responsible for paying the annual FACTS tuition payment fee and/or FACTS Grant and Aid fee.

### **Afterschool Care Fee**

Afterschool care is available most school days from the end of the schoolday until 6pm. Days without afterschool will be listed on the calendar. The fee is \$15 per day attended and will be billed regularly through FACTS. Students picked up after 6pm will face additional fees. Repeated late pickup or lack of payment will result in dismissal from the afterschool program. Students not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of school or scheduled activities will be placed in afterschool care.

### **Returned Check Fees**

When a check payable to Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus School is returned for any reason, (i.e., insufficient funds), the payee is responsible for any bank fee. Replacement funds and bank fee must be paid by a money order, bank check or cash.

When a FACTS tuition payment is returned for any reason, FACTS will re-attempt payment up to two (2) times on the next available date. For each returned payment, FACTS will assess a fee to the responsible party and it will automatically be deducted from the responsible party's bank account. After three attempts, the responsible party is to pay the tuition directly to Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus School in the form of a money order or bank check. Any assessed fees are payable to FACTS.

### **Delinquent Accounts**

If a tuition and/or afterschool program account is delinquent for more than 60 days, a student may be refused admittance to class or afterschool until the account is made current or a new payment plan is coordinated with the school office personnel and Principal. Graduating students' accounts must be paid in full by April 30th.

## **Tuition Refund**

The tuition refund policy is as follows:

1. If a student with FACTS tuition *monthly* payments withdraws between the end of school and September 1, the June, July, and August tuition payments will be deducted from the responsible party's bank account.
2. If a student with FACTS tuition *non-monthly* payment plans withdraws between the end of school and September 1, 75% of the June payment will be deducted from the responsible party's bank account.
3. If a student withdraws after September 1, any tuition paid will not be refunded, including the payment due the month of withdrawal.

## **Financial Aid**

Families with students in Grades K2 (Kindergarten/ 5 years old) through Eight (8) are eligible to apply for financial aid through FACTS Grant and Aid. Families are responsible for the FACTS Grant and Aid application fee. Pre-kindergarten (K1 – 3 and 4 years old) students are not eligible for financial aid.

**An Annual Calendar is provided to indicate days of closure.**

## **Statement of Financial Disclosure**

Please note that financial documentation will only be released to the individual(s) that pay the tuition. In cases when more than one individual pays the tuition, separate invoices and statements will be generated.

## **Policies and Procedures:**

### **Signing In and Out**

Students arriving after 8:30am or leaving prior to 2:30pm must be signed in or out at the front door. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

### **Pick up Information**

If you send someone else to pick up your child, they will need to show a photo ID if unfamiliar to us. They need to be listed on your child's authorized contact list. If that person is not on the list, the child will not be allowed to leave with that person.

We will not accept a telephone call, fax, or handwritten note as permission for a child to leave with an adult not on the list. This form needs to be changed in person or on the online enrollment portal.

Staff will take the steps necessary to contact the Parent/Guardian to pick up the child. If the Parent/Guardian is not accessible, another authorized person from the emergency list is contacted to pick up the child. The police will be called if any unauthorized person arrives to pick-up a child who either refuses to leave or causes any disturbance. No exceptions will be made to this policy!

### **Late Pickup Information**

We ask that you arrive to pick up your child about 10 minutes before closing. If you arrive after 6pm, late fees will be charged at the rate of \$1.00 per minute. These fees are expected to be paid by the end of the week the late charge is accrued.

### **In the event that the child is at the center, and we have not received a phone call from you the following policy will take effect:**

1. A staff person at the center will attempt to contact the Parent/Guardian(s) for instruction.
2. If no response, the staff person will call the authorized adults on the emergency contact list to arrange the child's pickup.
3. If by 1 hour after closing time no Parent/Guardian or authorized contact person has been made and there is no plan for the pickup of this child, a call will be placed to the Department of Child and Family Services Unit to report an abandoned child.
4. Staff will await further instructions from this Emergency Unit.
5. Staff should notify Parents/Guardians as to what arrangements were made regarding their child when contact is made or by placing a note on the door of the center.

### **Transportation/Field Trip Information**

We do not provide transportation in vehicles for children. All children will be dropped off and picked up by a Parent/Guardian/Emergency contact. Children may be transported on a public-school bus with Parent/Guardian permission.

An *Off-site Activities Permission* Form will be sent home for each child in the event of trip (walking or otherwise). Off-site activities also include any walking trip in a stroller or walking with a group of children. This form will accompany each child on the off-site activity.

### **Emergency Closures**

We announce our closures and other important information via email and follow the closures of Somerville Public Schools. You will also receive an email from the principal alerting you to any changes in the schedule.

### **Referral Services/Developmental Assessments**

We currently are assessing your child's development using Teaching Strategies Gold. We use an online version of this assessment tool. A copy is given to the Parent/Guardian and a copy kept in the child's enrollment file.

	<b>Assessed</b>	<b>Parent/Guardian Meeting</b>
Preschool/Pre-K	Every 6 months	Biannually
Children with IEP or IFSP	Every 3 months	Every 3 months

The following plan will be followed by the center when there is a concern for a child needing a referral to appropriate social, mental health, educational, and/or medical services, including but not limited to dental check-up, vision, or hearing screening, should the program staff feel that an assessment for such additional services would benefit the child.

- Staff will inform the supervising teacher or the Director of the specific area of concern for the specified child.
- Staff will observe and record information on an observation form. A copy of this form is given to Parent/Guardian and kept in child's enrollment folder. The teacher may request a Parent/Guardian meeting to discuss the area of concern for the child.
- A Parent/Guardian meeting is held to discuss the staff's and/or Parent/Guardian's concerns. Observations, interactions, and documentation is shared at this meeting by both Parent/Guardian and center staff.
- A plan is devised to address concerns for home or school. A copy of the plan is given to Parent/Guardian, staff, and the enrollment folder.
- A referral may be made if needed. Parent/Guardian are asked to sign a release to specific agencies that may assist with the child's concern. A copy of the release is given to the Parent/Guardians and kept in the child's enrollment folder. The plan is shared with all staff that have direct contact with the child during the day. Parent/Guardian are encouraged to contact their pediatrician or other existing services already in place to work with us in developing a plan which best suits the child.
- A letter is sent to either Early Education Public Schools or Early Intervention to notify them that a child attends our program that has an IEP or IFSP with them. Our contact information is shared to coordinate services.

Referral Resources in the community include but are not limited to:

Somerville Public Schools

Will Verbits, Assistant Director of Special Education for Services and Supports, 617-625-6600 x6807 or the public school department (St.1972.c. 766) where the child resides.

### **Child Guidance Policy**

Children are always guided respectfully and appropriately for their developmental age. Physical abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and the deprivation of food or shelter are never allowed at the center.

Our staff participates in the Pyramid Model philosophy of age-appropriate child development expectations, fostering positive attention to the children in our care and the re-teaching of new skills to replace negative behavior skills. Consistency, routine, observation, and relationship building between teacher and child are some of the key elements of this model. Our center will continue to implement new ways to meet all children's needs for social emotional support which will help them in building readiness skills needed for future success in school and in building friendships. Additional resources on the Pyramid Model can be found at [www.NCPMI.com](http://www.NCPMI.com).

### **Notification Policies**

The school will notify parents immediately via email of allegation of abuse or neglect, identification of a communicable disease or condition, introduction of pets, or use of any herbicide or pesticide (prior to use, when possible). When a particular child is injured or an unanticipated absence occurs, the school will reach out via phone to ascertain and communicate all relevant information.

Parents may visit the program at any time by coming to the front door and being buzzed in. This policy will be communicated upon enrollment and in all relevant handbooks.

St. Theresa will notify the EEC in the event that the following circumstances occur, per Massachusetts EEC requirements:

- (1) Immediately if the death of any child occurs while the child is in care, resulting from an injury or event that occurred while the child was in care, any injury or illness that requires hospitalization of a child in care, and any medication error which occurred while the child was in care. If a reportable condition regarding a contagious illness is available, St. Theresa will also contact the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health and relevant local authorities.
- (2) In writing, within five days of the initiation of any legal proceedings brought against St. Theresa school or any person employed by the school if such proceeding arises out of circumstances related to the care of children in the school or may impact the continued operations of the school.
- (3) Within 24 hours, if an incident occurs on the premises that results in a report to law enforcement officials or a response by the fire department (other than a false alarm) and that could impact the health, safety, and/or wellbeing of children in the care of St. Theresa, or in the event of the arrest of a Provider or person regularly on the premises. St. Theresa, if requested by the Department, shall prepare and submit a written report regarding the incident.
- (4) Immediately of any accident involving the transportation of children when such transportation is provided or contracted by St. Theresa.
- (5) When non-compliance with applicable codes and regulations prevents renewal of required inspection certificates.

## **Abuse and Neglect (From Massachusetts State Law)**

- (a) Any form of abuse or neglect of children while in care is strictly prohibited.
- (b) St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School staff and educators must operate the program in ways that protect children from abuse or neglect.
- (c) Staff/Educators are responsible for abuse and neglect if:
1. The educator admits to causing the abuse or neglect, or
  2. The educator is convicted of the abuse or neglect in a criminal proceeding, or
  3. The Department of Early Education and Care determines, based upon its own investigation or an investigation conducted by the Department of Children and Families subsequent to a report filed under M.G.L. c. 119, §§ 51A and 51B, that there is reasonable cause to believe that the educator or any other person caused the abuse or neglect while children were in care.
- (d) Every staff/educator is a mandated reporter under M.G.L. c. 119, § 51A and must make a report to the Department of Children and Families whenever he/she has reasonable cause to believe a child in the program is suffering from serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon the child, including but not limited to sexual abuse, or from neglect, including but not limited to malnutrition, no matter where the abuse or neglect may have occurred and by whom it was inflicted. Mandated reporter training is provided for staff upon hiring at beginning of the year orientation. New families have access to information on mandated reporting through the handbooks of the school. This handbook also contains information regarding [shaken baby syndrome](#), [abusive head trauma](#), and [child maltreatment](#) (at the links included).
- (e) The licensee must notify the Department of Early Education and Care immediately after filing or learning that a 51A report has been filed alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of the program or during a program-related activity. St. Theresa will also fully cooperate upon receipt of allegations of abuse or neglect with the investigation of the EEC Department.
- (f) The licensee will notify the Department of Early Education and Care immediately upon learning that a report has been filed naming an educator or person regularly on the child care premises an alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect of any child.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School will ensure that any educator accused of the abuse or neglect of a child in a report to the Department of Children and Families, filed pursuant to G.L. c.119 §51A does not work directly with children until the Department of Children and Families investigation is

completed and for such further time as the Department of Early Education and Care requires. Such staff will be placed on leave from the building while an investigation occurs.

## **Challenging Behaviors**

We will work with the Parent/Guardian to develop a behavioral support plan for use in home and at the center when a child is demonstrating challenging behavior.

We utilize services to help support both the children and the families during this challenging time, (Counseling, behavioral consultant, Staff Development and Educator Training, etc...) St. Theresa of the Child Jesus School does however reserve the right to suspend and/or terminate a child from the program when the health, welfare, and safety of the child, other children, and/or staff are at risk. A child may be suspended or terminated from the center if a behavioral plan is in effect and it is not in the best interest of the child or children in the group for the child to attend the center at that time.

## **Enrollment Termination**

A child may be suspended or terminated from the program for:

- Chronic tardiness when picking up the child from the center
- Failure to submit required medical and authorization forms to the center.
- Failure to provide us with adequate phone numbers for Parent/Guardian and/or emergency authorized contact persons.
- Inappropriate or unsafe adult behavior from individuals dropping off or picking up child to be determined by the Director.

In order to avoid termination/expulsion/suspension, a meeting and plan will be developed between the school officials, including the Director, and the family to best support the family. This conversation and plan may include referrals for evaluation, diagnostic, or therapeutic services. It is only when all other processes have failed that the school will move on to termination.

The situation for which caused the child to be suspended or terminated is explained to the child in language that is both sensitive and appropriate for the age of the child. Parent/Guardians will be provided with written documentation as for the specific reasons cited for the suspension or termination (from the program director) and under which circumstances (if any) the child may return.

## **Disinfecting and Sanitizing**

This center follows the standards for cleaning both our facility, equipment and toys set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

## **Security System**

Our building has locked entrances. Please use the doorbell to alert us to your arrival outside of normal arrival (7:45-8:30) and dismissal times. All visitors and volunteers should sign in at the office and receive a badge.

Phone and fax are located in the front office. A portable phone is also available.

**Health Care Policies**

The following guidelines are provided for all children falling ill. Additional information can be found in our Health Care Policy Plan or by contacting the school nurse.

Illness or Infection	May return to Child Care
Excessive or Frequent (3 or more times within a 12 hour span) Vomiting	24 hours after last episode
Diarrhea (More than child's normal number of stools, increased stool water, or decreased form)	24 hours after last loose stool
*Fever of/or over 100.5	24 hours after fever free with no fever reducing product given during that time (Tylenol,advil,etc...)
Head lice	24 hours after treatment No nits or lice are present
Measles	4 days after the rash appears
Mumps	9 days after onset of gland swelling
Chicken Pox	5 days after rash or lesions are dried
Pertussis	Until 5 days of antibiotic given
Pinworm	24 hours after treatment has started
Purulent Conjunctivitis	24 hours after treatment has started
Ringworm	Until treatment has begun
Rubella	7 days after rash appears

Scabies	After the treatment has been completed
Mouth Sores	In a child who cannot control his or her saliva, after the physician or local health dept. states child is non-infectious.

### **Management of Infectious Disease**

This policy is in addition to our current Covid Protocol symptom exclusion list.

Our exclusion policies for serious illnesses, contagious diseases and reportable diseases are in conformance with regulations and recommendations set by the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health, based on information found in Department of Public Health's: Health and Safety in Child Care Manual in consultation with our health care consultant, Nurse Cynthia Harling-Ojeda.

Staff/Educators will notify Parent/Guardians in accordance with Department of Public Health recommendations when any communicable disease or condition has been introduced into the program. Staff/Educators will follow the recommendations of the Department of Public Health regarding the use of insect repellents.

### **Medication**

There are times when a child must have a special medication. Only qualified persons are allowed to give this medication and it must be kept by the nurse or principal. Under no circumstances can a child keep medication in a classroom or self-administer it. Consent forms must be completed and signed by a parent/guardian and physician for medication to be administered. Also, the parent/guardian, not the child, must deliver the medication in a proper prescription bottle. The following information must be listed on the bottle:

- Physician's name and telephone number
- Student's name
- Name of medication
- Dosage amount
- Time it is be administered
- Length of time medication must be taken.

A maximum 30-day supply only can be kept at school. A letter for change of dosage or medicine must come from the physician.

The school should be informed when a student is taking medication. Faculty is not permitted to administer medication under any circumstances. Extraordinary medical circumstances must be called to the attention of the principal.

Parents will be notified of any observations by faculty which may be of a physical nature and considered worthy of note for the well-being of the student. This includes mental and emotional observations as well as physical.

Where possible, all unused, discontinued or outdated medications shall be returned to the parent or guardian and the return appropriately documented. In extenuating circumstances, with parental consent when possible, such medications may be destroyed by the school nurse in accordance with any applicable policies of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Food and Drugs. All medications should be returned at the end of the school year.