



# **FAMILY HANDBOOK**

**2025-2026 School Year**

Updated 5-15-25

## Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School

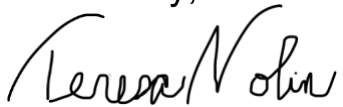
# WELCOME!

Dear Seeds of Joy Family,

Welcome to Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School! We are a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Ambler, a place where lives are changed by Christ, and we live out our faith together. We are deeply rooted in the heart of Ambler and want to see our community transformed by the love of God. We have a vision for the children and surrounding areas of Ambler to benefit from a high quality, early educational program. We strive to provide a warm, loving, and safe environment for your child at Seeds of Joy. We are honored and committed to beginning your child's educational journey at Seeds of Joy Nursery School.

Thank you for choosing Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School. We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment!

Sincerely,



Teresa Nolin  
Director, Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School  
267-644-5688  
tnolin@fpcambler.org  
[www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy](http://www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US .....	1
Philosophy .....	1
Mission.....	1
Certification .....	1
Definition of Family .....	1
Hours of Operation .....	1
Holidays .....	1
Admission & Enrollment .....	2
Inclusion.....	2
Non-Discrimination .....	2
Family Activities .....	3
Confidentiality .....	3
Staff Qualifications.....	3
Child to Staff Ratios .....	3
Communication & Family Partnership .....	3
Publicity .....	4
CURRICULA & LEARNING.....	4
Learning Environment .....	4
Outings and Field Trips .....	4
Transitions .....	5
Technology in the classroom .....	5
Multiculturalism .....	5
Celebrations.....	5
Toilet Training .....	5
GUIDANCE .....	5
General Procedure .....	5
Challenging Behavior .....	6
Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families .....	6
TUITION AND FEES .....	6
Tuition Rates.....	6
Methods of Payment.....	7
Late Payment Charges .....	7
Early Arrival/Late Pick-up Fees .....	7
Credits .....	7
Scholarships and tuition assistance.....	7
ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL.....	8
ABSENCE .....	8
Vacation.....	8
Withdrawal .....	8
Closing Due to Extreme Weather .....	8
DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP .....	8
General Procedure.....	8
Car Line Procedure .....	9
Cell Phone Usage.....	9
Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up .....	9
Right to Refuse - Child Release .....	10
PERSONAL BELONGINGS.....	10
What to Bring .....	10
Lost & Found .....	10
Toys from Home .....	11
NUTRITION.....	11
Foods Brought from Home .....	11

Food Allergies .....	11
Lunch Munchers .....	11
HEALTH .....	12
Immunizations .....	12
Physicals .....	12
Illness .....	12
Allergy Prevention .....	13
Medications .....	13
Communicable Diseases .....	14
Mandatory Closure Policy .....	14
SAFETY .....	15
Clothing .....	15
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play .....	15
Water-Play .....	15
Injuries .....	15
Biting .....	15
Respectful Behavior .....	15
Smoking .....	15
Prohibited Substances .....	16
Dangerous Weapons .....	16
Child Custody .....	16
Suspected Child Abuse .....	16
EMERGENCIES .....	16
Lost or Missing Child .....	17
Fire Safety .....	17
Emergency Transportation .....	17
Shelter in Place Drill .....	17
Quiet and Hide Drill .....	18
FAMILY ACTIVITIES .....	19
NURSERY SCHOOL POLICIES .....	19

## **ABOUT US**

### **OUR PHILOSOPHY**

We believe children learn through playing; individually, collaboratively and in a safe, loving environment. Our students learn by exploring and experiencing many enriching educational activities daily, inside and outside of the classroom. Our teachers and assistant teachers observe, encourage and teach our students to develop their individual skills and creativity. We believe, with their guardians, we are part of a child's village that fosters and supports their early learning and development.

### **Mission**

Using exploration, open ended play, and discovery, our PA State Standards based curriculum allows children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. We are committed to sharing God's love through our everyday interactions with children.

### **Certifications and Designations**

License from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)

Designation in Keystone STARS 2: Pennsylvania's Quality Rating and Improvement System

NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children Member

### **Definition of Family**

In this handbook we refer to family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor, or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best interest, and responsibility of the child in our care.

### **Hours of Operation**

Childcare services are provided from 8:30 AM to 2:45 PM Monday through Friday for the 4's.

Childcare services are provided from 8:30 AM to 2:45 PM Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday OR Monday – Thursday for the 3s.

Childcare services are provided from 8:30 AM to 12:45 PM Tuesday and Thursday OR Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for the 2s.

The Lunch Munchers program is available from 11:45 AM to 12:45 PM Monday through Friday for all students, 2-5 yrs old. Learning Extenders is available for children, 3, 4 years old from 12:45-2:45 pm. Children should be picked up promptly at 2:45PM.

### **Holidays**

We are closed for certain holidays and follow Wissahickon SD's Calendar:

- Election Day

- Thanksgiving
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Week
- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- President's Day Weekend
- ANSA Yearly Conference
- Easter Week
- Memorial Day

There will be early closings on:

- Wednesday before Thanksgiving – dismissal 11:45am
- Last day before Christmas Break– dismissal 11:45 am
- Last day of school – dismissal after end of year picnic: 11:45 am.

## **Admission & Enrollment**

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed, and first tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

Based on the availability and openings, our school admits children from 2 years old to 5 years of age.

Children are admitted without regard to race, culture, gender, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate based on special needs if a safe, supportive environment can be provided and maintained.

## **Inclusion**

Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs. We involve and welcome specialized service providers (speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy etc.) We provide direct, social, play-based, and multi-sensory instruction in a nurturing environment that meets and exceeds the Pennsylvania State Standards for Early Childhood for Older Toddlers and Pre-Kindergarteners.

If your child has an identified special need, please inform the director and teacher upon enrollment and complete a special education partnership release form. A copy of your child's Individualized Education Plan will also be requested. We want to be a pivotal part of your child's team in meeting his/her needs.

## **Non-Discrimination**

At Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School, educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students. Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School, a ministry of the first Presbyterian Church of Ambler, clarifies that internal church matters, including questions of religious doctrine and values, are not subject to state oversight and authority.

## Family Activities

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit our classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals. Please see page 19 for more information.

## Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released apart from that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies, such as DHS or OCDEL. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

## Staff Qualifications

Our teachers and assistant teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

<u>Position Title</u>	<u>Education/Certification</u>	<u>Experience</u>
Teacher	Degree in Education	2+ years
Teacher Assistant/Aide	Child Development Associate Or Childcare experience	1 year

Teachers and assistant teachers participate in ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, health and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

We strongly discourage families from entering employment arrangements with staff (i.e., babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our staff outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by Seeds of Joy.

## Child to Staff Ratios

Children are always supervised. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
2-year-olds	<u>6 to 1</u>	<u>12</u>
3-year-olds	<u>7 to 1</u>	<u>14</u>
4 and 5 -year-olds	<u>8 to 1</u>	<u>16</u>

## Communication & Family Partnership

**Bulletin Boards** located throughout Seeds of Joy, provide calendars, celebration information, announcements, etc.

**Newsletters:** Weekly news from your child's classroom will be sent via ProCare each week. A school wide, monthly newsletter will be sent by the director via ProCare.

**ProCare:** We encourage you (and all your child's caregivers) to download our ProCare app to your cell phone so that you can check your child in and out of our classrooms, receive timely announcements and reminders from the director and immediate messages including photos from the teachers.

**Family Visits:** Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer to read, or come along on a field trip! Regular volunteers will require clearances. A highlight of our spring is our Family Fest on a Friday in April. Our Seeds of Joy and FPCA families will enjoy a night of family fun!

### **Conferences**

Family & teacher conferences will occur twice a year for our Sprouts and Trees. Our Seeds will have a scheduled conference in November and as needed, in the spring. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. We encourage you to communicate any concerns with our staff and director.

### **Publicity and Marketing**

Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at school for use within the church and school building, on the website and/or Facebook and Instagram pages. Written permission (or denial) is obtained on the final page of our enrollment form.

## **CURRICULA & LEARNING**

### **Learning Environment**

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that is developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage the ability to work and play with others.

### **Outings and Field Trips**

Weather permitting, we will conduct supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips locally for all children. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in our enrollment form.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child's class. Permission slips for each trip must be signed by the child's family. For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes/sneakers are a must.

The safety of children and staff will be of highest priority in all activities of our program. Car seats and seat belts are critically important during travel to/from Seeds of Joy as well as during field trips. We are not permitted to allow a child in the car without a car seat.



## **Transitions**

Your child's transition into nursery school should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to come to school during our Meet, Greet and Play days to meet with your child's future friends and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns.

## **Technology in the Classroom**

Our normal daily routine does not typically include technology (I Pad, TV, DVD) viewing and computer use. However, from time-to-time, we may use technology (without advertisements) as a teaching aid. All electronic media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world.

## **Multiculturalism**

We value a multicultural education for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and for our environment. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aides to teach our children diversity and respect for our world.

## **Celebrations**

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff, and community. Please reach out to the director if your family would like to share a part of your culture with our students! Our holiday celebrations will need the assistance of family donations of food and party goods. We ask that one or 2 guardians from each class work with their classroom teacher to organize and plan holiday parties throughout the school year. More information will be provided at our Back to School Night.

## **Toilet Training**

The most important factor in making the toilet training experience successful is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet training is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical, emotional abilities and your family's concerns. Children in our Seeds and Sprouts programs (2, 3 yr. olds) will be encouraged and supported in becoming toilet trained. Children in our Trees program (age 4 by September 1<sup>st</sup>) are required to be toilet trained to attend our programs unless documentation from a physician is provided. Discussion with our staff and director is encouraged to ensure your child is comfortable and successful in our program.

## **GUIDANCE**

### **General Procedure**

Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in our school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

## **Challenging Behavior**

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. Each student at Seeds of Joy has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly environment
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring and nurturing adults

If a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. If you have any concerns about this, please report them to the Director.

## **Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families**

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. Parents will be asked to meet with staff and the director to work together at home and at school to provide a program that addresses a child's behaviors. We work closely with various service providers including the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit to help meet the needs of all our students.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others or themselves.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

### **Tuition Rates:**

Tuition is based on the kind of programming (AM or PM), age of student and length of the program. All rates are published in our family brochure and through our ProCare software.

Tuition is invoiced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the previous month and due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. All billing is due through our ProCare software. Your credit card or ACH account will be set up by July 1<sup>st</sup> with a reoccurring, autopay payment. If you need to change or delay your payment, please consult with the Director.

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the Enrollment Agreement Form, (found on our website [www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy](http://www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy)). Payment for

this contracted schedule is required on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closures or closures due to inclement weather.

### **Methods of Payment**

Families will pay a monthly, automatic electronic fund transfer or credit card through our online software, ProCare. Once your child's enrollment form is complete, you will be emailed an invitation to a ProCare account. Instructions will be provided on how to set up an account and download the app to your cell phone. ProCare questions can be addressed by the director. Checks and cash will not be accepted for tuition payments.

### **Late Payment Charges**

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs. Late payments will result in the imposition of late payment fees. Failure to remit payments will result in nursery school services being terminated.

If payment is not received by the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month, a late fee of \$25 will be charged to your next payment.

### **Early Arrival/Late Pick-up Fees**

Arriving before Seeds of Joy is open, or late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. A charge of \$5 for every 5 minutes you are late or early will be charged to your ProCare billing account. Numerous late pick up may result in nursery school services being terminated.

### **Credits**

- Credit may be given for serious illness or serious injury – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child being hospitalized, absent due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit.
- Please see Seeds of Joy's COVID-19 policy for pandemic related credit information.

### **Scholarships and Tuition Assistance**

We believe that every child should have the chance to benefit from a high-quality nursery school experience. Financial help in the form of tuition scholarships through our

church's mission committee or participating in OCDEL's Child Works program may be available for eligible families. Please email or call the Director to obtain an application.

## **ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL**

### **Absence**

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 9:15 AM, please message your classroom teachers between 7-9 am via ProCare OR call the school @ 267-644-5688. At 9:30 am, if your child is not present and you have not messaged us, your classroom teachers or the director will message you. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you. All absences need to be recorded.

### **Vacation**

While we recognize the value of family vacations, Seeds of Joy does not provide credit for vacation days.

### **Withdrawal**

Two weeks written notice is required when withdrawing a child from any of our programs for any reason. This includes adjustments to your child's afternoon programming. If the proper notice is given any unused tuition will be refunded within 30 days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents or guardians will be charged tuition for the two additional weeks.

### **Closing Due to Extreme Weather**

If severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced via ProCare messages, email, and/or on our Seeds of Joy Christian Nursery School Facebook page and/or seedsofjoy Instagram Page. If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

## **DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

### **General Procedure**

We offer an Early Risers program beginning at 8:30 am each day. The Early Riser drop off is limited to a certain number of children dependent on staffing and ratios. The children will play outside on the playground or in Fellowship Hall until car line begins at 9:00 am.

Our nursery school car line begins at 9:00 AM each day and ends promptly at 9:10 am. Children utilizing our car line will be supervised by our staff until 9:10 am when they will be accompanied to their classrooms. If parking, parents are expected to accompany their child inside the building and bring their child to the classroom at 9:15 am. Please do not come into the building until 9:15 AM. We have an agreement with Ambler borough for free parking from 9:15-9:30 am. Please park in the general parking spots; do not park in any reserved spots, you will be ticketed.

Our school day ends at 2:45 PM. Children participating in our afternoon program will be dismissed via carline beginning at 2:35 pm. Please remain in your car until a staff member

brings your child to the car. Staff are not permitted to secure your child in his/her car seat. You are responsible for securing your child in your car. Staff will not allow a child to be sent home without a car seat.

### OPTIONAL - Carline Procedure for Regular Program Hours

- Refer to our Car Line Map with an aerial view of the church parking lot for direction on flow of carline.
- Please drop off promptly between 9:00-9:10am and pick up promptly at 2:35-2:45pm
- Car seat should be situated behind driver for easy in/out.
- Teachers and teaching assistants will meet you at your car – **please stay in your car.**
- During drop off, have your child's bag packed and ready to be handed to teachers. Please scan the ProCare QR code presented by staff and check your child in.
- During pick up, please meet your child at the passenger door **and secure your child into your child's car seat.** Staff will **not** secure your child in your child's car seat. Proper security of your child in your car is your responsibility.
- We cannot allow a child to be sent home in a car without a car seat.

### Seeds of Joy Carline Map



### Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in our school dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we must communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you not use your cell phone while inside unless there is an emergency. In carline, please refrain from cell phone usage to keep all parties safe.



## **Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up**

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

To safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child, if possible, but if after four hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

## **Right to Refuse - Child Release**

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

### **What to Bring in the Backpack**

- Two-year-olds: four diapers, a change of spare clothes and a labeled water bottle. We will store three diapers and leave one in the backpack. We will keep the change of clothes at school.
- Three-year-olds: two diapers (or more if going through potty training program) and a change of clothes and a labeled water bottle. We will store one diaper and leave one in the backpack. We will keep spare clothes at school.
- Preschoolers: change of clothes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, water bottles, backpacks) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. Please place spare clothes in a labeled Ziplock bag and update it seasonally. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to school. Please replenish supply of clean, spare, weather appropriate clothing.

Additional classroom donations are requested in September and January via a newsletter through ProCare. These items include baby wipes, cleaning wipes, rolls of paper towels, large/small Ziplock bags, tissue boxes, cleaning sprays, etc. We have an Amazon wish list for educational materials which is available at any time:

[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2XUA8OQUEHIRR/ref=nav\\_wishlist\\_lists\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2XUA8OQUEHIRR/ref=nav_wishlist_lists_1)

## **Lost & Found**

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box labeled and located at the top of the stairwell on the third floor. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

## **Toys from Home**

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into Seeds of Joy unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

## **NUTRITION**

A small snack provided by Seeds of Joy will be served mid-morning to all children alongside each child's personal water bottle brought from home. We will refill water if necessary. If your child has allergies or dietary restrictions, they are permitted to pack their own snack for snack time in their backpack. Please just inform your child's teacher. Proper washing and sanitizing of hands and tables will occur prior to snack time.

## **Food Brought from Home**

Food brought from home is permitted under the following conditions:

- Baked goods may be made at home if they are fully cooked, do not require refrigeration and were made with freshly purchased ingredients and there must be enough food for all children.
- Foods should be labeled with the child's name, date, and type of food.
- Children will not be allowed to share their lunch or food provided by the child's family unless the food is intended for sharing with all the children.
- Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially wrapped package.

## **Food Allergies**

Due to an increase in food allergies in young children, we are a **Nut Aware School**. This means peanuts, peanut butter, tree nuts and other nut butters are not allowed in snacks or lunches that are brought into the school. Please check all foods prior to packing lunches. Any items containing nuts will not be served. We cannot guarantee entirely nut free premises.

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing. The written notification must be updated at least annually. Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

If there are food allergies in a classroom, all families and teaching staff at the school will be notified.

## **Lunch Munchers**

Lunches will be refrigerated upon arrival to school in room 307 and in the conference room near the nursery. Staff will place lunches on tables for the children each lunch period. All children will sit at the table and eat their lunch. We will wash hands, pray and practice calming breaths. Children are encouraged to help themselves to the food from their own lunches. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Children are asked to remain at the table for 20 minutes to eat their lunches. The staff will encourage eating all the items in their lunch but will never force a child to eat the entire contents. Upon the completion of the lunch period, children are asked to use the bathroom and wash their hands before beginning a free play period.

Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, popcorn, raw vegetables and hard candy.

Teachers or teaching assistants who are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR are present at all meals.

## HEALTH

### Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). Every January, we check with the public health departments and the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule.

Pursuant to 28 Pa. Code § 23.84, Seeds of Joy Christian School observes state regulations regarding medical and religious exemptions, as follows:

(a) Medical exemption. Children need not be immunized if a physician or the physician's designee provides a written statement that immunization may be detrimental to the health of the child. When the physician determines that immunization is no longer detrimental to the health of the child, the child shall be immunized according to this subchapter.

(b) Religious exemption. Children need not be immunized if the parent, guardian, or emancipated child objects in writing to the immunization on religious grounds or based on a strong moral or ethical conviction like a religious belief.

**Parents or guardians that object to the immunization on religious grounds or based on a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief are required to provide a statement explaining their reasons for not vaccinating their children, and Seeds of Joy reserves the right to grant or deny the exemption.**

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before we start school year but must be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

### Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to school. Seeds of Joy has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms, and this is not an all-inclusive list. We will keep your child comfortable and will not participate in any further activities that day.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.



- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Mouth sores
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever without medication, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They can participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething)
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.
- Please see COVID-19 policy for specific information regarding the pandemic found on our website, [www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy](http://www.fpcambler.org/seeds-of-joy)

## **Allergy Prevention**

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

## **Medications**

Our center will administer prescription or over the counter medication to children in the case that they cannot be without the medication for the duration of their school day.

All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- Prescription medications require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication can meet this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.
- Non-prescription medications require written permission and instructions signed by the child's primary care physician. The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.
- Non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream), sunscreen and insect repellent require a note or permission of a parent or guardian, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid, which will not extend beyond 12 months.

### **Communicable Diseases**

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the Montgomery County Department of Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis
- Whooping cough/pertussis

### **Mandatory Closure Policy**

In the event of a mandatory closure lasting more than two weeks due to a pandemic or other factors beyond the control of SOJ, and to the extent that we are unable to make up classes, students will be eligible for a pro-rated refund for days missed. For any closure of two weeks or more, we will attempt to employ a virtual model that will be voluntary and offered at a reduced tuition of 50% for three and four-year-olds. If your family decides not to send your child(ren) back after Seeds of Joy reopens following a pandemic or other mandatory closure, the remainder of that tuition payment will not be refunded.

## **SAFETY**

### **Clothing**

Please dress your child in practical clothing that enables them to pull up and down easily for independent toilet use and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of messy activities including painting and outdoor play so “play clothes” are recommended. Our playground is used as an extension of the school, and daily play and learning is conducted outside whenever weather permits.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for nursery school play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities, so please dress your child in closed toe shoes.

### **Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play**

Children are expected to go outside when the forecast temperature/wind chill is above 25 degrees, the forecast temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees, there is no precipitation falling, and there is no current air quality alert. It is understood that given these parameters there may be portions of some days that do not meet the conditions of weather permitting since forecasts are generally targeted to a point in time in the day.

### **Water Play**

Supervised children are permitted to engage in water play. Precautions such as sanitization and thorough cleaning are taken to ensure that water play stays as safe and as germ free as possible.

### **Injuries**

Safety is our highest priority in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken through our ProCare software. If the injury needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

### **Biting**

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn strategies for appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter’s family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

## **Respectful Behavior**

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

## **Smoking**

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment are always non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on church premises.

## **Prohibited Substances**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the church premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

## **Dangerous Weapons**

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object that is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, 911 will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises.

This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

## **Child Custody**

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

## **Suspected Child Abuse**

Staff members at Seeds of Joy are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse, neglect, or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Seeds of Joy will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

## EMERGENCIES

### Lost or Missing Child

The director will make reports to a child's parent, to the police, and to DHS in accordance with PA code § 3270.20 if one or more of the following occurs:

- A child receiving care is lost or missing from Seeds of Joy.
- A child in the care of Seeds of Joy is left behind on a nursery school excursion.
- A child receiving care at Seeds of Joy is left unattended in the church when the school and church are closed.

### Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with fire extinguishers, posted emergency procedure and evacuation plans, new U/L listed fire doors, and new fire detection system and alarms.

Our fire evacuation plan follows established best practices and is reviewed with the children and staff monthly. We will hold a fire drill on the first Tuesday or Wednesday of each month. All classes will exit the building and walk to Ambler Borough Hall, 131 Rosemary Avenue.

Our fire evacuation plan can be found in the main hallway on the third floor, in the director's office and church main office.

### Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

### Shelter In Place Drill Procedures

#### NOTIFICATION

- Alert the children that a shelter-in-place drill is about to happen.
- Director or designee will announce "Shelter-in-Place."

**ACTION**

- Bring children and staff to the Choir Rehearsal Room in the Sanctuary Basement. This is an interior room without windows or vents that has adequate space to accommodate children and staff.
- Close and lock all doors.
- Shut off the building's heating systems, air conditioners and exhaust fans.
- Seal all cracks around the doors and any vents into the room, if applicable to the specific emergency.
- Conduct a roll call to ensure everyone is present and accounted for in the area.
- No outside access is permitted, but activity within the facility may continue.

**COMMUNICATION**

- Role play: providing status updates for families
- Practice using a portable battery or hand-assisted radio to listen for announcements from local officials.
- Always keep cell phone within reach.

**CARE AND SUPERVISION**

- Bring disaster supplies to the designated safe place location, including class backpacks.
- Follow established procedures for assisting children and/or staff with special health care needs. Bring medications, special health care plans, and assistive devices for communication and mobility.
- Follow established procedures for addressing children's nutrition and hygiene needs.
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities.

**CONCLUSION**

- Continue the shelter-in-place drill until the director or designee announces the end of the shelter-in-place drill.

**Quiet and Hide Drill (Intruder in area)**

An alert text will be sent via ProCare app. that the Drill has begun.

Children will be taken to the following areas:

Class	Location	Safe Hiding place
Trees 4	Room 306	Move to the wall between the two doors of the classroom. Kids can stand up against the wall between the two white bookcases.

Trees 5	Room 307	Move into the supply closet in the back of the classroom. There is a lock on the inside of the door.
Sprouts 4/ 4 day 3's	Room 308	Move to the corner on the same wall as the entrance to the classroom. Kids can stand against the multi-colored cabinet.
Sprouts 3/3 day 3's	Room 310	Move to the corner on the same wall as the entrance of the classroom. Kids can sit against toy bookcases.
Seeds 2/3: 2 and 3 day 2's	Nursery/1 <sup>st</sup> floor	Exit out of the fire door and proceed to Ambler borough hall.

If class is outside on the playground or in Fellowship Hall, they will proceed directly to Ambler Borough Hall.

Our safe place is Ambler Borough Hall. If we must relocate, we will relocate there and contact parents via ProCare or school cell phone.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

**Family Events:** We have several events throughout the year that bring our school and our church community together. Please refer to our whole school calendar and watch for announcements!

- Meet, Greet & Play
- Blessing and Block Party
- Back to School Night
- Fall Field Trips
- Halloween Parade and Parties
- Family Advent Night
- Christmas Show and Parties
- Christmas Eve Family Services
- Culinary In-House field trip
- Weaver Way Walking Trip
- Knights Garden Walking trip
- "Senior" Prom
- Family Festival
- Easter Family Church Services
- Spring Field Trip (all students)
- Ambler Theatre Walking Trip
- Annual Family Picnic

**Classroom Activities:** Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Accompany your child to field trips
- Read to children in the classroom – be a mystery reader!
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Welcome new families to the school community
- Share a piece of your culture with us
- Family - Teacher conferences

**Classroom Parents:** Each classroom will need 1 or 2 parents to work with the classroom teacher and director to plan special events including classroom parties, special projects and Teacher Appreciation Day. More details about our classroom parents will be given at Back to School Night in September.

**School Policies:**

Our school policies not included in this handbook are reviewed bi-annually and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the nursery school director.