

The St. Gregory The Great  
Parent Handbook



## **Director's Message**

We welcome you and your child to our preschool program.

This handbook is prepared for students and parents at Saint Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program. Its purpose is to provide both the guidelines and policies that govern the way we operate our school. No one document can answer every question or address every concern that arises throughout the school year; however, every attempt has been made to address the issues that affect the daily lives of students in our preschool.

Open communication is critical to the successful operation of our preschool. You are an integral part of your child's preschool experience. It is our belief that students and parents need to know and understand policies and guidelines. If everyone, both students and parents, understands what is required of them, we can look forward to a smoother running school year.

God Bless you, and the children you have entrusted to our care.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program admits students of any sex, race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on sex, race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, athletic or other school administered programs.

## **Our Philosophy/Mission Statement**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program looks upon the field of child development as a total educational experience in which administrators, teachers, and parents are partners in education, working collaboratively in all aspects of a child's growth and development. We believe from the time of birth; all children are ready to learn and will discover knowledge through active experimentation. It is our aim, therefore, to provide an early childhood enrichment program which is educationally based, through age-appropriate activities that focus on the stages of each child's cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and physical needs.

## **Our History**

Our school opened its doors in September 2004. The preschool was started by St. Gregory the Great Church in an effort to reach out to the community.

The program began with one multi-age classroom composed of three and four year old children. There was one head teacher, two assistants, and a director.

Since then, St. Gregory's has grown in leaps and bounds. Our program is now home to nine classrooms, and over thirty staff members.

Our school is a non-profit institution and is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

## **Our Beliefs**

- All children can learn.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique intellectual, physical, social, and emotional needs.
- Student learning is the chief priority of our school.
- Teachers, staff, administrators, and parents share the responsibility for providing a supportive learning environment within our school.
- Clear goals and high expectations for student achievement guide the development of the curriculum and the design of instructional strategies and learning activities.
- Students learn in diverse ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning.
- Assessments of student learning should provide students with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their achievement.
- The commitment to continuous improvement is imperative if our school is going to enable students to become confident, self-directed, lifelong active learners.

## **Our Program Promotes**

An environment which:

1. Develops creativity, interest, and the joy of learning through an interactive process with the environment, using all the senses. Discovery of relationships

through direct experiences and the promotion of choice are encouraged.

2. Enhances communication skills through fostering meaningful dialogues with children and adults, listening to and discussing stories, participating in group play, language experience activities, relating to pictures, role playing and pretending, as examples.

3. Develops self-control and responsibility through gentle guidance by setting clear, consistent, fair limits for behavior and expectations, redirecting to more acceptable behavior if necessary, guiding children to resolve conflicts and modeling skills that help children solve problems.

4. Develops fine and gross motor skills by providing a balanced amount of large and small muscle activities. Gross Motor activities might include running, jumping, balancing, and group games. Fine motor skill development may be enhanced through artwork, use of scissors, solving puzzles, and block building.

5. Introduces pre-academic skills and exposes children to letter sounds, numbers, the alphabet, shapes, and color. Examples of pre-academic skills are number concepts, such as one to one correspondence and counting meaningful objects. Aspects of language arts are presented through exposure to stories, poetry, and the provision of a print-rich environment.

6. Encourages appropriate interaction with other children and adults through opportunities to communicate, practice social skills such as cooperating, sharing, and helping others make positive choices.

7. Teaches problem-solving and decision-making skills through individual choices of activities and encouragement of child- initiated investigation, exploration, questioning, and making suggestions.

8. Enhances concern for others through recognition of feelings, demonstration of respect, ability to share, promotion of understanding of commonalities and acceptance of differences between individuals. Our program promotes examples of kindness.

9. Encourages the development of a positive self-concept through demonstration of respect for and acceptance of children. This leads to a positive and supportive relationship between teachers and children which is crucial to social and emotional growth.

## **Our Program Provides**

- An awareness of God, Our Creator, through Religious Instruction
- Learning that fosters exploration and inquiry.
- Meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include:
  - manipulation of varied materials, objects, textures
  - dramatic play
  - creative arts
  - small and large muscle activities
  - participation in simple games
  - exposure to literature, math, music, science, and nature
- Acquisition of basic skills
- Creative activities that develop a child's imagination
- Active hands-on learning
- Interactive teaching and cooperative learning
- Thematic activities
- Social interaction
- Indoor and outdoor play, which provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and manipulation.

## **Absence/Attendance**

All absences must be called into the school.

Absence/Attendance and punctuality are important habits to assist children in developing social success. If a child is absent, parents should call the school office at 835-1278 before 8:30 a.m. to report the absence. Messages may be left on our automated system. Please follow the appropriate prompts. When a child returns to school, a note of explanation must be given to the child's teacher. If a student is absent 5 days or more a physician's note is required for their re-admission to class. Such notes are required by the State of New York and are kept on file.

## **Accident Policies**

At school accidents that must be reported include any accidents or incidents that may cause minor or severe injuries to the students in our care. Accidents must be reported as soon as possible. Employees are obligated to report

immediately to the director any of the following:

- Head, skull or face injuries
- Damage to any of the senses
- Dislocation of limbs
- Damage to skin (e.g., extensive burns, bruises, or cuts)
- Blows or injuries to the spine, back, ribs
- Loss of consciousness
- Slips or falls

When an employee witnesses or are involved in an incident (non-threatening or serious) they must report such an incident to the director immediately. The director, or the classroom teacher, will call the child's parents and advise them of what happened and how the situation was managed. In case of a severe injury 911 will be called and the parents will be asked to come in immediately. An official report must be completed immediately. The employee who reported the accident/incident must provide the following information:

- Place of accident/or incident
- Date and time of accident/incident
- Student(s) or Staff involved or injured
- Witnesses
- Actions are immediately taken depending on the severity of the injury.

In case of an accident or injury parents are asked at registration to authorize all emergency medical, dental, surgical care and hospitalization listed on the Child's Office of Children and Family Services Registration Card.

If hospitalization is required, the parent will accompany the child in an ambulance to the hospital of choice. If the parent is unavailable the director will accompany the child by ambulance to the hospital of choice.

### **Accreditation**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program, an integral part of Saint Gregory the Great Parish, is a Catholic institution under the mandates of the New York State Department of Education. St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. All New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulations and policies can be found at <https://ocfs.ny.gov>

If you wish to file a complaint through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, please contact 1-800-732-5207

### **Address Changes**

Please inform the school office as well as your child's teacher, if you change your address, telephone number, e-mail address or any emergency contact numbers. It is imperative that we have accurate information to reach you in the event of an emergency.

### **Admissions**

The New York State Education Department recommends that every child admitted to an Early Childhood Program for threes be three years old before December 31st of that year. A child admitted to an Early Childhood Program for fours must be four years old before December 31st of that year. An interview is required for admission.

### **Assessments**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program uses assessment tools as follows:

1. To determine children who are developing in an age-appropriate manner are not in need of further assessment. Further assessments may be conducted if there are: significant language delays, behavioral problems, etc.
2. If issues identified in the screening process are confirmed, a definitive plan of action, or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be designed. (Done by each individual school district)
3. Accommodations are made to ensure both screening and assessing children in their dominant language. The screenings and assessments are done in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, including in the appropriate language.
4. Assessments are done multiple times a year: on the first day of school, within the first 45 days of school, and two other times throughout the school year.

St. Gregory the Great has in place a child observation and assessment policy that includes the collection and protection of assessment results, and these results are

shared with parents two times a year at Parent Teacher Conference. The information collected is confidential. We shall be using the following: The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment Toolkit for Ages 3-5 based on The Creative Curriculum's goals and objectives. Collecting data on each child's level, across various domains, enables us to accurately create developmentally appropriate curriculum. This provides teachers with a structure for observing children to plan for each child. The toolkit provides all the assessment materials needed.

We are also using the ESI-R3, a developmental screening instrument that provides a quick overview of a child's development in three major areas: visual-motor/adaptive, language and cognition, and gross motor. All three sections are designed to investigate a child's abilities within a particular area, but screening recommendations are based on the total score. The following is an overview of the three areas or domains of the ESI-R3.

St. Gregory's understands that parents have the right to refuse recommended services for their child. However, St. Gregory's reserves the right to withdraw a child from the program if we cannot meet the needs of the child. We will work together to find a program that will allow your student to thrive and grow.

Visual-Motor: This section uses block building, drawing tasks, and a visual memory game to assess fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, short-term memory skills and the ability to reproduce two and three-dimensional forms and structures.

Language and Cognition: The language and cognition items focus on language comprehension and verbal expression, the ability to reason and count, and the ability to remember auditory sequences.

Gross Motor: These tasks are designed to assess the child's developmental level in gross motor skills. They are targeted for the expectations of each age level and quite specifically show the child's performance on a continuum of development.

Observation and assessment results are used to guide instruction. Teachers use the data gather during assessment to individualize learning including one to one small group and large activities. All findings are kept confidential in a locked cabinet in the office and only teachers and administrators have access to the files. Parents can view their children's files upon request.



## **Allergy Policy**

St. Gregory's takes a serious stance on allergy awareness and prevention. It is St. Gregory's Policy that strict protocol be followed in accordance with NY State guidelines.

The plan includes the following elements:

- Anaphylaxis prevention through screening and identification of children with allergies
- Individualized emergency plans with clear action plans for children known to have food or other allergies
- Training programs for all staff members
- Strategies to reduce risk of exposure
- Communication and action plan for dissemination of allergy information to all staff members
- Annual notification of anaphylaxis plan to all parents

**Arrival and Dismissal:** There are assigned entrances and exits.

The program opens at 8:45 a.m. For the staff to prepare for the day, please do not enter the building prior to 8:45 a.m. unless your child is enrolled in the early morning drop off program. It is the duty of classroom personnel to prepare for your child's arrival, so please understand that when the classroom doors are closed, we are setting up and planning for the children.

Our secondary security alarm will be activated at 9 a.m. at all doors. Anyone arriving after 9 a.m. must use the doorbell at the glass doors adjacent to the preschool office. Parents/Caregivers must identify themselves to be let into the school. Once identified, they will be buzzed into the school.

For safety reasons, the adult bringing/picking up a child each day must sign in and out with the child's teacher. Children should be brought into their classrooms by the adult who brings them to school. *Please do not allow a child to enter the building alone or walk unaccompanied.* No child is to be dropped off/picked up in the parking lot or at the door. Parents are responsible for their children on route to and from the program. Please allow enough time both in the morning and in the afternoon for a calm, smooth and relaxed separation, and re-connection.

Children will only be released to those listed on your signed dismissal form. It is

important to notify us in writing if your child is to be picked up by someone other than the usual authorized person(s). A special form was included in your program portfolio for listing those people who are authorized to pick up your child.

It is important that you be on time to pick up your child. Please be aware that a fee will be charged for any late pick up. It is important that we be able to contact all parents and emergency contacts in the event of a late pickup.

### **Birthdays**

We would be happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school. Please contact your child's classroom. We would like to remind you that St. Gregory the Great is a nut free school, because children are susceptible to life-threatening allergic reactions from certain food products.

### **Breast Feeding**

Although we do not have infants or toddlers in our program, St. Gregory the Great provides active support to breastfeeding families.

- Our program makes a comfortable place available for mothers to nurse their infants.
- Our program provides an atmosphere that welcomes breastfeeding families.
- When asked, our program is happy to provide breastfeeding materials in the languages of the families served in our program.

### **Calendar**

A yearly school calendar will be posted to the website so you can plan accordingly. The school year begins in September and runs through early June. Each classroom teacher will provide a weekly calendar of activities, so that you are aware of special events and projects that will be happening throughout the week.

### **Change in Family Situation**

Please notify the director and classroom teacher if there are major changes in your family situation, such as: a new baby, moving, separation, divorce, hospitalizations, death, and parents going out of town. Teachers and staff members will be able to help your child work through these changes in his/her life if we are made aware of them.

## **Child Abuse Policies**

### **Mandated Reporting**

Every staff member at St. Gregory's is required by law to help the Office of Child Protective Services become aware of children who may be abused or neglected. According to the law, public or private school teachers, educational administrators, guidance, or family counselors; as well as day care/childcare workers, are mandated reporters. Thus, it is the policy of St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program to report any and all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to Child Protective Services immediately by telephone and to follow up in writing within 24 hours. Our preschool will offer full cooperation of its staff during the investigation of the reported incident. The director and staff will follow the appropriate steps if abuse/neglect is suspected. More information about mandated reporting and child abuse can be found at <http://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/cps/>

### **Clothing**

- Please provide a change of clothing for your child which will be kept in the classroom
- Please label each article of clothing with your child's first and last name

### **Labeling**

All items coming from home must be labeled with your child's first and last name. Including:

- Water bottles
- Lunch boxes
- Snack bags
- Backpacks
- Clothing
- Folders

### **Curriculum**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program curriculum follows developmentally appropriate practices (i.e., Child-centered, and firsthand learning)

deriving from credible research into child development. It is also aligned with the New York State Pre-kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core. It offers a varied curriculum that includes science, nature, music, dance, health, prayer, pre-reading, math readiness, creativity, and small and large muscle activities. The curriculum fosters social, spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive development and group skills. It allows children to make choices, encourages independence and kindergarten readiness. It visibly integrates Gospel teachings. The curriculum also fosters ongoing parent involvement and community building during specific times throughout the school year. These family events include Children's Carnival, Christmas Pageant, Creativity Fair/Art Show, Donuts with Dad, Family Fun Night, Graduation Day, Grandparents Day, Moving up Day, Muffins with Mom, Potluck Supper, St. Jude's Trike-A-Thon, Thanksgiving Celebration and Trunk or Treat. St. Gregory the Great uses a written curriculum or curriculum framework (The Creative Curriculum for Pre-School)

The Creative Curriculum is our blueprint for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. We interpreted it and used it to build our program. We incorporated our own interests and teaching styles, as well as information about the children we teach and their families, to make the curriculum work for us.

Our curriculum is:

- Consistent with prevailing professional opinion and research on how children learn.
- Curriculum content is designed to achieve long-range goals for children in language, literacy, mathematics, science, social and emotional development, and creative arts.
- The curriculum provides activities that encourage knowledge in a developmentally appropriate manner. Activities are presented in a fun, interactive way that makes learning enjoyable for young children.
- The curriculum presents themes based on areas of general interest to pre-school children, including familiar topics and those that explain the child's world.
- Curriculum goals are realistic, attainable, and appropriate for the preschool classroom. Adjustments will be made as needed to be sure the activities best meet the needs of each child.
- The curriculum provides a wealth of materials for children to generate interest, encourage interaction, aid in knowledge

construction, meet individual needs, and accommodate various learning styles.

- The curriculum respects and supports individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity, and encourages parents to become partners in their child's education.
- The curriculum is built upon a flexible scope and sequence. Skills and concepts are developed sequentially, with each new skill based on the foundation of previous learning.
- The curriculum is based on themes that spark interest and curiosity in young children.
- The curriculum engages children actively in the learning process, with hands-on activities and manipulative materials.
- The curriculum offers a balance between child initiated and teacher-facilitated learning opportunities.
- The curriculum puts priority on developing a pre-schooler's social/emotional skills and building character.
- The curriculum is supportive of children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment.
- The curriculum encourages children to learn about their world by engaging them in projects that are of interest to them. They then can acquire skills from their own explorations of content. These experiences promote positive feelings of success, competence, and a love for learning.

### **Discipline Policy**

The Program has a written policy on the discipline of children which provides for positive guidance, with direction for resolving conflict and the setting of well-defined limits.

Teaching staff will equitably use positive guidance, redirection, and planning to prevent problems. They will encourage appropriate behavior using consistent clear rules and involving children in problem solving to foster the child's own ability to become self-disciplined. When the child understands words, discipline will be explained to the child before and at the time of any disciplinary action. The teaching staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property, and learn to be responsible for their actions. The teaching staff will use discipline that is consistent, clear, and understandable to the child. They will help

the child learn to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs, and learn turn taking.

St. Gregory's reserves the right to withdraw any child from our program if the child cannot thrive, succeed, or meet certain behavioral standards. If St. Gregory's is unable to meet the needs for a least restrictive environment for your child, we will work as a team to find a more suitable environment where your child can thrive.

### **Emergency Evacuations / Fire Drills**

State law requires practice for emergency evacuations and fire drills, therefore, throughout the school year drills will be performed. The students will be familiarized with fire regulations which will be posted in each classroom. Strict silence is to be maintained during fire drills. It is essential that when the first signal is given everyone obeys orders promptly and clears the building by the prescribed route as quickly as possible. The teacher will give the students instructions. The fire box in the school has a direct line to the fire department. The fire bell is loud. We are very experienced in helping children and we model non-fearful behaviors which in turn helps your child. Emergency evacuation plans are also practiced with the children.

#### **Primary Routes:**

- Rooms 1,3,5,7,8: Exit the rear blue doors facing Harrison Avenue and walk to Irving Place.
- Rooms 2,4,6: Exit the front blue doors facing Broadway and walk to Park Avenue.
- Rooms PK and K: Exit the rear classroom doors facing the playground and walk to Park Avenue.

#### **Secondary Routes:**

- Rooms 1,3,5,7,8: Exit the front blue doors facing Broadway and walk to Park Avenue.
- Rooms 2,4,6: Exit the rear blue doors facing Harrison Avenue and walk to Irving Place.
- Rooms PK and K: Exit rear Mahogany Doors facing parking lot and walk to Park Avenue.

Classes may re-enter the building when the bell sounds again.

In case of a real fire, or crisis, all students must be escorted to the Lower or Upper Church or The Harrison Fire House.

In case we are not able to leave the school building, we will go into "LOCK DOWN" mode. All classes will remain in classrooms with doors locked. Teachers will use their code word to alert children to go to their designated spot in the classroom. If for any reason we must evacuate this building, we will go to the upper or lower portions of St. Gregory the Great Church, located at 215 Halstead Avenue, Harrison or we will go to the Harrison Fire House located at 206 Harrison Ave. Harrison. We will call all parents from there. The safe evacuation of children is our first priority, and the children will never be left unsupervised.

### **Emergency Forms: OCFS Registration Forms**

Parents have been provided with a Blue Form with emergency contact information on it to complete before the beginning of the school year along with an emergency contact sheet. Careful and total completion of this form is essential for each school family. Parents also have the important responsibility of **updating the information** each time such information changes

### **Emergency Plan: Shelter In Place**

Shelter in Place is a response to an emergency that creates a situation in which it is safer to remain in the building rather than to evacuate. Most situations calling for sheltering in place are in response to events that have a relatively short duration (hours). Examples of situations that might require sheltering in place: Severe weather conditions, extreme temperatures, escalated public disturbance. These emergency procedures are practiced at least twice during the school year. The Primary Room where the children will be located would be the Auditorium/Gym and the Secondary Room would be the Individual Classrooms.

### **Family Self-Assessment Program**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program uses the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Family Strengthening Self Assessment tool for program improvement. We are actively working to assess and improve our family responsive practices. This process is spread over a period and hopefully will result

in a meaningful action plan.

### **Family Support**

St. Gregory The Great feels that supporting both parents and children during transitional times is a key component to a successful school year. We understand that separation for both parents and students of this age group can be difficult. When children start our program we support the children and the family in a variety of ways. We have created an "ease-in" schedule. We welcome the parent to come in with their child who is starting childcare for the first time. Sometimes, it is difficult for a child who is attending program for the first time to be comfortable in a new setting. It is very common for children to have issues with separation when entering a program for the very first time. That is because children have attachment to their family members. However, they form new attachments to their warm and caring teachers. Secure attachments between children and educators are important for children to feel safe and confident in the environment. If your child is exhibiting signs of separation anxiety, this article may be helpful to you <https://shorturl.at/grtGU> (See Childcare Director for a paper copy if you wish)

Children who transition within our program are also supported, as well as their families. Such support is exhibited through email notification in advance of a transition<sup>784</sup> or written notes. These notifications will be sent about any changes in regards to planned transitions to a new classroom or if there are to be changes in classroom teachers working within the room.

For children transitioning out of our program, conversations start within the classroom, months ahead of kindergarten. We use circle time to start discussions about new classrooms and what changes students might find. We also dedicate time to helping children understand what a new beginning might look like, as well as, making sure they are comfortable leaving behind their old classroom. A parent workshop will also be held to inform parents of how and when to register for kindergarten.

### **Inclusion**

We know that communication is crucial at St. Gregory's. Our program values the diverse cultures represented within our school community and strive to communicate with your child in both English and their spoken language as



necessary. In some cases, our staff may not know the language spoken by a child. In these cases, we are eager to learn key phrases and words in your child's language. It is important that your child feels understood at St. Gregory's. We strive to work towards an environment and inclusiveness of all cultures and languages.

### **Final Sight**

To build community relations, improve parental involvement, and ensure school safety, St. Gregory the Great uses Final Sight as a rapid communication service. This service allows the school administration to deliver voicemail, e-mail, and text messages, keeping parents and staff informed of important and time sensitive information. We consider Final Sight a critical component to our school communication.

### **Food Allergies**

For each child with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutrition needs, the child's health care provider should provide the program an individualized care plan prepared in consultation with family members.

Children with food allergies shall be protected from contact with the problem food. With family consent, the program posts information about the child's allergies in the child's classroom to be used as a visual reminder to all adults who interact with the child during the day.

### **Health Procedures**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Program is planned with the health and safety of your children in mind. The Medical Statement of Your Child in Childcare form is to be filled out by your child's physician. The completed forms should be submitted with your registration application. This is required as per Section 2164 of the New York State Health Law.

Proof of complete immunization is required **before** a child can enter the school program. New York State School Immunization Law requires that children be up to date on their immunizations to attend preschool. A copy of their immunization record is mandatory and will be required before your child can enter preschool.

A parental consent form, which authorizes emergency medical treatment and/or transportation if parents cannot be contacted when an emergency occurs, shall be on file for each child. In case of emergency where there is an injury to the child, the director will take the following steps:

1. Notify the parents if possible.
2. Notify the doctor listed by the parent on the medical form.
3. Take the child to Greenwich Hospital or White Plains Hospital Emergency Room via ambulance or other emergency vehicle designated by Harrison Police or 911 respondents.

Please let the director and your child's teacher know of any allergies your child has, or if he/she is on any medication. Multiple members of our staff have Medication Administration Training (M.A.T.). At present we can administer emergency medications. Please contact the office for the appropriate medication consent forms. All head teachers and assistant teachers are certified in CPR and First Aid.

### Health Policy (Illness/Injury)

Please keep your child home if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- Diarrhea - (within the last 24 hours)
- Vomiting - (within the last 24 hours)
- Severe nasal congestion
- Enlarged glands
- Sore throat
- Frequent cough
- A fever - (within the last 24 hours)
- A contagious stage of any communicable disease
- Cold - with a runny nose

Parents should notify the director if their child contracts a communicable disease (such as chicken pox, head lice, pink eye, strep throat) and has been exposed to children in the class. We will notify the parents of those children so they can anticipate an illness. If a child becomes ill during school, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child immediately.

### Licensing Agencies:

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program is licensed by New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and follows the OCFS Regulations for Child Day Cares.

OCFS Regulations are located at each school entrance and in each individual classroom or on the OCFS Website under Child Care.

The OCFS website gives you news and links to update state information, forms and more. You can access the website at <https://ocfs.ny.gov>

### **Lunch/Snack Time:**

Parents are responsible for providing their student with a snack and lunch (if they are enrolled in the full day program). Please be aware of the following:

- No glass containers
- All items should be labeled with first and last name
- Please provide students with a nutritious lunch
- We are a nut free school

### **Napping/Sleeping Arrangements**

Napping and resting arrangements are made in writing between the parent and the program in the preschool registration packet. Such arrangements shall include the area of the program where the child may rest or nap, how the child will be supervised, consistent with the requirements of section 418.8 of OCFS Regulations. The resting places are:

- Located in a safe area
- Located in a draft free area
- Will be where children are not stepped on
- Be in an area where egress is not blocked
- Allow a person to move freely and safely within the area to check on or meet the needs of children
- Be at least two feet apart from each other
- Children will be placed head to toe

Children who do not wish to nap are offered a quiet activity.

Children who attend extended day classes are given rest time daily. Each family is asked to supply a rest mat for their child as well as individual clean mat coverings (fitted crib sheet). These will be sent home weekly for laundering. Rest mats are stored separately so they do not encounter the sleeping surfaces of another child's rest equipment. Rest mats are cleaned daily. The rest mats are placed on the carpeted portion of the classroom. Classroom personnel will supervise students. Soft and soothing music is played during this period and blinds are drawn. The rest period lasts approximately 30 minutes. If a child is asleep at the end of the rest period, we will not disturb them.

### **Newsletters**

Since keeping you informed is a top priority, every month a newsletter will be available on our website from the director. This newsletter will have valuable information and reminders. Teachers will also be sending home classroom newsletters. All newsletters will be available on our website [stgregoryearlychildhood.com](http://stgregoryearlychildhood.com)

### **Nutrition / Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Programs Obesity Prevention Policies: Goals, Recommendations and Potential Actions

#### **Goal: Increase physical activity in young children**

- Providing opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 15 minutes while children are in care.
- Providing daily outdoor time for physical activity when possible
- Providing a combination of developmentally appropriate structured and unstructured physical activity experiences.
- Joining children in physical activity
- Integrating physical activity into activities designed to promote children's cognitive and social development.
- Providing an outdoor environment with a variety of portable play equipment, a secure perimeter, shade, natural elements, and an open grassy area, varying surfaces and terrain and adequate space per child.

#### **Goal: Decrease sedentary behavior in young children**

- Implementing activities for preschoolers that limit sitting or standing to no more than 30 minutes at a time.

Goal: Promote the consumption of a variety of nutritious food

- Encourage parents to provide their children with a variety of healthy foods and age-appropriate portion sizes. All snacks, lunches and beverages served in the program should be consistent with the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal patterns and safe drinking water are available and accessible to the children.

Goal: Create a healthful eating environment that is responsive to children's hunger and fullness cues

- Provide meals and snacks as part of a daily routine, requiring adults to sit with and eat with the children.

Goal: Help adults increase children's healthy eating

- Provide guidance and training to parents of young children and those working with young children, so they have the right tools to increase children's healthy eating.

Goal: Limit young children's screen time and exposure to food and beverage marketing

- Limiting screen time, including television, cell phone or digital media to less than 30 minutes
- Counseling parents and caregivers to limit screen time

Goal: Promote age-appropriate sleep durations among children.

- To adopt practices that promote age-appropriate sleep durations
- Creating environments that ensure restful sleep, where children sleep and there is low noise and light levels during napping
- Encouraging sleep-promoting behaviors and practices, such as calming nap routines.

Goal: Use social marketing to provide consistent information and strategies for the prevention of childhood obesity in early childhood.

### Outdoor Play

We have daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits and provided

the weather air quality and environmental safety conditions do not pose a threat. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large muscle skills, get exercise, and be active. In cases when we cannot go outside due to weather conditions children can use indoor equipment for similar activities inside. To make sure that your child can play comfortably outside it is important to dress him/her according to the weather.

### **Photographs of Students**

Photographs of students at school activities are taken, and used for classroom displays, social media pages, and the school yearbook. If a parent does not want his/her child's photograph to be used in public in ways such as these, a written statement must be signed and sent to the school office.

### **Potty Training**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program believes that children develop naturally and normally at different rates and times. Toilet training is a human landmark that is the responsibility of the family, not the program, but the program will support the family's effort as much as possible.

Children will be supervised in the bathroom by classroom personnel and assisted when necessary. This includes buttoning, unbuttoning, zippering, reminding a child to wipe, flush, and wash hands. Please send children in clothing that they can manage independently.

### **Progress Reports**

We have created our own preschool progress reports. The teachers have created a checklist that outlines the various levels of development for the student's age and group. These include categories such as: Social/Emotional Development, Art/Music Development, Fine/Gross Motor Development, Work Habits, and Reading/Math Readiness. Conferences are available at any time by request. These may be either in person or by telephone except during class time. The Program schedules two conferences each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Progress reports are issued at both these times. You are encouraged to discuss any issues regarding your child at any time during the year. We really want to work as a team with you, so please, if you need to talk with us, we are available.

## **PTA**

The purpose of the PTA of St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program is to support and promote our children's education by assisting the administration and staff. Specifically, the purposes of the PTA are:

- To facilitate open communication between the School Administration, parents, faculty, and students.
- To provide support for our children's educational and recreational needs by:
  - A. Providing volunteer support for the school community
  - B. Providing social programs and educational activities for parents, students, and teachers.
  - C. Promoting the school to the parents and community.

Please look for opportunities throughout the year to become an involved member of the PTA. Your involvement is important and offers a fantastic way to meet new friends while making a difference for the children and their education.

Parent Opportunities to Volunteer include:

- Scholastic Bookfair
- Pumpkin Patch
- Class Parties
- Trunk or Treat

## **Parent Advisory Committee**

A Parent Advisory Committee is an essential component of our school. Our Board acts in an advisory capacity. Parents bring their time and expertise as advisors and consultants with whom the preschool director and staff can share ideas, plans and challenges. The parent group often acts as a sounding board and brainstorming team. Parents can serve on specific committees to best utilize individual skills, such as having an accountant serve on a finance committee or human resource professional serve on a hiring committee.

Our Parent Advisory Board also takes on a more direct role where they provide enrichment activities and support the staff. This can take the form of volunteering in the classroom, bringing in supplies, and much more. They might even arrange to bring in special guests, such as a storyteller, or a magician. Parents also advocate for the school to keep its reputation strong which in turn can help enrollment and fundraising.

The Parent Advisory Board serves as a means for two-way communication between the Program staff and the parents-at large, ensuring all parents are adequately informed and effectively engaged. They are the parent voice on the board that makes certain that the parent perspective is heard on such things as the schedule. Similarly, they can deliver a unified preschool voice to the parents and perspective parents.

#### Governing Board

- Fr. Joseph Tierney, Pastor
- Robin Hughes, Director
- Judy Wagner, Parish Office Manager
- Parish Trustees: Bill Broderick, James Hassell
- Parish Finance Committee (members selected by Pastor)
- Parish Council President: Al Chiuccchini

#### Recess Policies

Weather permitting students are given recess. Decisions to have outside recess during freezing weather depend upon the temperature and the wind chill factor. Shorter outside recess times are scheduled on very chilly days. Always dress your child for outside recess. Students are to remain in their assigned play area during outdoor recess.

#### School Closings

In the event of severely inclement weather or mechanical breakdown, school may be closed or the starting time delayed. The same conditions may also necessitate early dismissal.

When school is closed for delayed because of snow, dangerous weather, or other emergencies, parents will receive a Final Sight voice or e-mail message informing them of a closing or delay. School closings or delays will also be posted on Channel 12 News. Please do not call the rectory or parish house. Weather days and holidays are missed days, there are no makeup days. On snow days, if the Harrison schools are closed, we are closed.

#### Screen Time



Screen time is limited to 30 minutes per week, with the intention of enhancing the curriculum. Screen usage will be thematically based, as well as literacy enriched. There will be no screen time during mealtimes or nap time. Since screen time is used to enhance academics, there will be no commercial advertising shown.

### **Spiritual Development**

Saint Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program provides a conscious program of spiritual development for each of its students. The school day starts with an opening prayer in addition to religion lessons are offered.

### **Toys From Home:**

Because toys from home can be lost or misused by other children, they are not permitted at school.

### **Tuition**

St. Gregory the Great Early Childhood Enrichment Program provides tuition payment options to parents through Blackbaud Tuition Management, a tuition management company that is set up exclusively to manage the school's financial needs by receiving payments, processing them, and depositing funds into the school's bank account. Blackbaud collects and manages all tuition.

There are several convenient payment schedules and methods available. Following enrollment with Blackbaud you will receive a confidential sign-in and password access to your account on-line. You can review your account and make payments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Typical Daily Routine:**

- Welcome: Meet students at classroom entrance
- Health Check
- Put backpacks away
- Attendance/Name Activity
- Choice of various centers and activities in room
- Themed Daily Lesson

### **Circle Time:**

- Hello song

- Prayer
- Pledge
- Our Day (go over the day's schedule)
- Helpers/Daily Jobs
- Music (songs/ fingerplays/musical concepts)

**Social Skill Lesson:**

- Students participate in children's literature and a short activity based on a social skill

**Bathroom/ Snack:**

- Use of restroom/wash hands
- Snack
- Focus on table manners and "having friendly conversation with friends"

**Music:**

- Students participate singing songs in large groups

**Center Time:**

- Children's Literature
- Classroom Centers based on various themes

**Book Time:**

- Students choose books to read individually or with a friend

**Gross Motor**

- Outside unless weather does not allow/inside appropriate gross motor activities

**Creativity Time: Arts and Crafts**

**Room Clean-Up:**

- Make sure the room is picked up
- Check cubbies
- Meet parents at classroom entrance

**Valuables**

The Program Director and staff cannot be responsible for valuables which students bring to school. It is recommended that students leave all valuables at home.

**Website**

Please visit our website for up-to-date information: [stgregoryearlychildhood.com](http://stgregoryearlychildhood.com)  
To reach our director, please email Robin Hughes at [stgregoryecep@gmail.com](mailto:stgregoryecep@gmail.com) or [rpecchia916@gmail.com](mailto:rpecchia916@gmail.com) .

