

**STRATFORD PRESCHOOL**  
JANUARY 2009

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

Stratford Preschool was established in 1969 by Jeanne Atkinson. It is now directed by Linda Huff, who worked with Jeanne for over 23 years at the school. The school's philosophy is to view each child as an individual and to help each child reach his/her full potential as a caring, giving and loving citizen of the world. The school's purpose is to promote development of the young child, ages three to six years, mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally, through cooperative efforts of teachers, family members and others who are positioned to nurture, stimulate and encourage the child.

Children enrolled come from many different neighborhoods and a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They are accepted, first-come: first-served. Prior to accepting an application, the director meets with the parents to outline Stratford's program, show them the classrooms and equipment and answer questions. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether the program being offered suits the parent's objectives for their child. Note that although the school operates in a church building, it is not related to the church and has no religious affiliation.

**Schedule:** The school operates September through May, Monday-Friday, 9 A.M. to 2:30 P.M., except for federal holidays, a break of approximately two weeks in mid-December and a week "Spring Break" the first full week of March. Three year old classes run from 9 A.M. until noon or 9 A.M. until 1 P.M. Four year old classes run from 9 A.M. until noon, 1 P.M. or 2:30 P.M. with classes actually in session from 9:15 A.M. until 2:15 P.M. allowing time for drop off and pick up carpools. Junior and Senior Kindergarten run from 9 A.M. until 2:30 P.M. All levels are five days a week.

**Enrollment:** To enroll a child, parents must complete an Application/Enrollment form provided by the school and make an initial tuition payment, as specified on the application form. This registration/tuition payment **is not the September** payment. Tuition is simply divided into ten payments and the first is due with registration and the other nine may be paid monthly from September through May or paid by the semester or yearly. Additionally, the parents must provide a completed School Entrance Physical Examination and Immunization Certification, signed by the child's physician.

**Tuition:** Tuition is specified on the Application/Enrollment form and is due by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month or late fees will be added to the amount due. Tuition covers all costs of materials and supplies.

**Telephone:** 460-0659. This number rings at school and is forwarded to the director's home after hours. The voice mail feature picks up if the line is busy or no one is available. The voice mail is checked frequently, while school is in session, less frequently after hours. The director can be reached at her home phone number after hours as well, 481-0589 or her cell 615-3918. If there is a crisis and you cannot reach the school, you may call the church at 464-2423, and ask for help; but realize that the church staff members are good neighbors only, and we try not to impose upon them with the school's business.

**Classrooms:** Each class has two teachers who work with the children. The class size is limited depending on the age of the children. The three and four year old classes are limited to a maximum of 16 children. The junior and senior kindergarten classes are limited to a maximum number of 20 children per class but may have fewer at the discretion of the director. Children attending Stratford are grouped in classes, according to age, primarily for social development. Interacting with others at their level of development, they form lasting friendships, based upon shared experiences. The child is allowed to move about within the classroom and select activities interesting to him, or her, individually. There is no lock-step learning. The teachers work individually with each child daily on alphabet, phonics, reading and other language arts skills as well as working with each child on math related skills. One of the few group activities is show and tell, which gives each child in turn an audience to address and one in which to learn to listen. At recess the child may run, jump, climb or slide on playground equipment, ride a tricycle, play with basketballs, soccer balls or dig in the sand with buckets and shovels.

Stratford classrooms are "open". The children may stand or sit, work or play alone, in pairs or in small groups. Meanwhile, the teachers encourage meaningful use of educational materials and equipment, which are abundantly supplied. The key is to keep each child engaged in stimulating, instructive work. Sometimes, the activity is one-on-one, teacher and child. Other times, a one-on-one task attracts others, and a cluster develops; yet, each child is learning, individually. Thus, a range of abilities exists within a class, but no child is held back, or pushed ahead for the sake of a group norm. It is not unusual to have children in a class learning individual letters of the alphabet, while others are beginning to read, or studying in a phonics workbook. The joy is watching each child blossom at his or her own rate.

Spread throughout the year, each class studies various age appropriate themes: seasons of the year, weather, plants, insects, birds, animals, family, transportation, etc. The teachers incorporate art, music and educational materials into each thematic unit.

For example:

The three-year-olds studying the farm, learn the names and habits of farm animals and common activities of farm life, learn that flour comes from wheat and is used in the bread we bake. They churn milk to make butter, then spread it on crackers

and enjoy eating it. American and European farm sets and farm related puzzles and puppets are available for free play during this period.

Parents may help with in-school activities and reinforce learning at home by reviewing new vocabulary. In addition, the children are introduced to classical children's literature. They paint at easels, use stencils, water colors, tempera, chalk and even shoe polish to create beautiful masterpieces.

The director works with classroom teachers and with the children, individually, to ensure that each child's developmental needs are met. Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with a teacher, or with the director, so that small matters, whether educational or administrative, may yield to minor adjustments, not grow into major problems. Success of the program---yours and ours---depends upon the faculty of well-educated, warm and loving teachers, who in cooperation with the parents are committed to giving each child the joy of learning and the foundational skills for a lifetime of achievement.

A pupil may be removed from school rolls at the parents' request, or upon the school director's initiative, should the child's behavior threaten the well-being of other children attending the school. The director and teachers consult with parents continually as to each child's progress to head off developing problems and afford every opportunity for any child to adjust to the program at school. Accordingly, no child would be permanently dismissed abruptly before parents have reasonable time to make other arrangements for their child. If parents expect to move from the area, we ask that they inform us, as far in advance as possible, so that we may fill the space without delay.

Our "open" classrooms permit children to move about and engage in interesting activities with age-appropriate materials, and our teachers' expectations are geared to the child's stage of development. Except that children are not allowed to interfere with or hurt one another, there are few "don'ts". Should a child become unruly, he is directed to the "thinking chair/time-out chair" to relax and calm down; then he is allowed to rejoin his group. We may also have "talk-time" with a child to suggest alternative ways to cope, think of others, share and take turns. We do not use harsh words, verbal abuse or corporal punishment. If a pattern of unacceptable behavior starts to develop, we consult with the parents to devise a program to promote positive behavior, both in school and at home. Our goal is to help grow happy, responsible, respectful, self-confident young men and women who are able to develop to their fullest potential.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURES**

We ask that children not be simply “dropped-off” at school but that each child be handed over, safely, to a staff member or person helping with carpool. That is, the child’s presence is noted and custody effectively established by the staff member or volunteer. In similar manner, upon departure of the child, a staff member transfers custody safely to a person authorized to pick up that child. Children must be escorted between vehicle and building and between building and vehicle. If a child is to leave school by arrangement other than the regularly assigned carpool, we must have written authorization for that change, prior to releasing the child. Any driver may be asked to show and must produce a picture identification to prove identity if staff members are not familiar with that driver.

Each child should be picked up promptly at the end of the school day. Should an emergency delay the pick up, please call the school, and provide pertinent information. A staff member will remain with the child at school until the parent, guardian, or other authorized person, arrives, or some other arrangement is made for the child’s care. No child will ever be left alone or in the care of a stranger. All custodial parents may have access to the school at any time during normal school hours when school is in session.

## **HEALTH AND EMERGENCIES**

If your child is ill, he/she should not be brought to school. Any child who has had a fever needs to be **fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school**. This is to protect your child and his/her classmates. Should your child become ill while at school, we will call and ask that you pick up your child as soon as possible. We do not administer medications at school.

The director and/or the classroom teacher will report any suspected child abuse, or neglect, to the child’s parents and, as required by law, to the Protective Services Unit, Department of Social Services.

## **WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS**

Stratford conforms to Virginia Beach Public Schools as to closing, opening late or closing early for hurricane, snow or other weather conditions. If Virginia Beach Public Schools are closed due to weather conditions, Stratford is closed. If Virginia Beach Public Schools open late, Stratford will open, commensurately late. For example a 2-hour delay in the opening of the Public Schools will cause Stratford which normally opens at 9 a.m., to open at 11:00 a.m. When the Public Schools close early, due to adverse weather conditions, Stratford will close early. Of course you may pick up your child earlier than announced closing time. Above these policy guidelines, use your own judgment to avoid driving in unsafe conditions.

## MISCELLANY

**ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER:** Please inform us in writing of any changes during the year, including any changes of your alternate contacts.

**BIRTHDAYS:** These are very special days for all children, and we would love to celebrate them at Stratford. Please check with your child's teacher by means of a note to set a time and date. A cake, cupcake or other special snack with colorful napkins and a drink are sure to be a hit. **We ask that goodie bags be saved for outside school parties.** If you are inviting the whole class to a party you may have the teacher or your child hand out invitations to the class, but if you are only having a few then we ask that the invitations **not** come to school.

**BOOK BAGS:** Each child needs a book bag to start the year. Shopping with your child for that special one can be a good way to prepare for the coming year's experience. Please, remember to **put your child's name and phone number on the bag** as many children choose the same, perfect bag. Also, please consider the size of the bag and what the child will be carrying in it. Younger children need room for a change of clothes and room for the lunch box and papers done at school; older children need room for the lunch box, papers done in class and reading books. Also consider the ease of opening and closing, the child should be able to get into the bag independently. **Please do not put toys hanging from the outside of the book bags.**

**LUNCHES:** Unless your child is to be picked up by 12:00 noon, you must send lunch with him/her. The lunch bag, box or other container **must be labeled with the student's first and last name.** The state now also requires us to date the lunches daily. Stickers will be available in each classroom for this purpose. We do not refrigerate or heat lunches, therefore, perishable food must be packed in an insulated container with an ice pack. We suggest simple, yet nourishing food which your child will eat. Any uneaten food will be sent home when possible so you can see what your child is eating. Soda is not allowed and will be replaced by water and the soda sent home. Also no nuts or hard candies are allowed due to choking hazards. Should you neglect to send lunch with your child, you may bring, or send, it later in the morning. In an emergency we will provide lunch to your child.

**CLOTHING:** Children should wear sturdy, practical play clothes to school. Although, we try to keep the children in smocks while doing arts and crafts, a spill is almost inevitable. And, please, **put name labels** in coats, sweaters, caps etc. Such items are easily left behind. Labels make it easy to return lost items. Girls should not wear platform shoes or shoes without backs. Sneakers are really the safest play shoe for the children. Girls should wear shorts under dresses or skirts so they can enjoy the slides and climbing toys.

**HOLIDAYS:** We celebrate many holidays at Stratford. The children love sharing in and learning about the holidays of other religious or ethnic groups, as well as those they observe at home. If you would like to help or to participate in such festivities, please inform the classroom teacher. Each class will have a sign up list for parents when you come to visit on the first two days of school and you can sign up then to help out with a special holiday or party if you choose to do so.

**CONFERENCES:** Parent-teacher conferences start in October. Although it may seem a long time after school starts, please realize that the teachers need time to get to know your child. Meanwhile, rest assured that if a problem arises, your child's teacher will contact you immediately. Conferences are held during the school day and start with the youngest class and over a period of weeks move through each class. The senior kindergarten conferences, therefore, are usually not held until November. Notice of when your child's conference is will be sent home several weeks before it is to occur and if you cannot make that date the teachers will arrange a time that is suitable to both you and the teachers. You are always welcome to contact the teacher for an update on your child at any time.

**SCHOOL PICTURES:** School pictures will be taken in late February and sent home for approval. Feel free to return any that you do not want to the classroom teachers.

**LANGUAGES:** Stratford offers French class once a week on Tuesday mornings for all students, Spanish class for those students in the Three year old classes and all others staying until 2:30, and German class on Thursday mornings for all students. We believe that exposing the children early to various languages will help them later in life as they pursue a different language.

**MUSIC:** The children enjoy music daily in the classroom but twice a week go to the music room and enjoy singing unit and seasonal songs with the music teacher. The children sing their fall songs and have a costume parade at the end of October and all parents and family members are invited. The children also sing at a spring program in May and all parents and adult family members are invited.