



PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-24

First Church in Sterling
6 Meetinghouse Hill Road
P.O. Box 40
Sterling, MA 01564
978 422-8256

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INTRODUCTION

The Village Green Preschool is licensed by the Massachusetts Dept. of Early Education and Care (DEEC.) (Regional office: 1441 Main Street #230, Springfield, MA 01103 - 413.788.8401) *The DEEC's Standards for the Licensure of Group Child Care Programs can be viewed at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/606-cmr-700-regulations-for-family-group-school-age-child-care-programs/download>. The preschool is nonsectarian and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. It serves Sterling and the surrounding towns. Although VGP is an independent operation, it is a community outreach program of First Church. It has a Parent Advisory Board which determines all school policy, sets tuition, approves hiring staff and the annual budget, and is responsible for the running of the preschool. The P.A.B. falls under the auspices of the Outreach Board of First Church and ultimately, its Governance Board. Parents may contact Board members at any time. Their names and phone numbers may be obtained from the Director. You should be able to meet board members at a variety of events throughout the school year.

*Parents may contact MA DEEC for information regarding the program's regulatory history.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Village Green Preschool is a nonprofit organization founded in October 1980 for the following purposes:

- ...To help each child develop a positive feeling about himself, both as an individual and as a group member
- ...To provide organized programs, play materials and guidance aimed at encouraging healthy growth and development - mentally, physically, emotionally and socially
- ...To provide hands on experiences which are challenging, meaningful and fun
- ...To help children adapt to group living by teaching them to share materials, space and attention
- ...To stimulate learning through sharing, varied experiences and language skills and to encourage the innate curiosity of children to discover and explore for themselves
- ...To provide a program that allows for individual abilities and differences

PHILOSOPHY

The environment of the preschool will provide a warm, nurturing, safe and loving place where self-concepts are enhanced, independence encouraged, and individuality respected.

Play activities are flexible within the daily schedule utilizing centers of interest to motivate learning and develop maturity.

Learning is individualized through the informal use of materials, equipment and experiences (both planned and spontaneous) of each day. Group experiences involving listening and movement will provide avenues for learning and for following directions.

The curriculum is designed to foster maximum development in the following areas: communication and language, socialization, self-expression, values, aesthetic appreciation, intellectual competency, physical skills and personal autonomy.

Maturity and growth are enhanced as children experience independence, creativity, and the joy of being with others while they play, explore, discover, imagine, create and ask questions. A wholesome self image will be encouraged as the children delight in themselves, in their new playmates and in the world around them.

Respect of self, of others and of property is fostered through the rules and limits set for the children and by the staff. Healthy habits and good manners are encouraged.

The teacher's role is to provide an environment where each child has choices and the opportunity to learn by doing. The teacher serves as a facilitator enabling each child to make discoveries on his/her own.

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

The preschool is located in Room 1 of the First Church in Sterling, 6 Meetinghouse Hill Road, on the Sterling town common. Please walk your child to Room 1 and always plan to pick up your child either at the playground (weather permitting) or in Room 1. Parking is available in front of the church, at the Butterick Municipal Building and at the Conant Public Library.

The preschool uses about 1,075 square feet of space divided into interest areas, among which are blocks, housekeeping, art, science, and music. A carpeted area for books, quiet play and games also provides a place for group listening activities. There is a bathroom directly off the classroom. A separate kitchen and two additional bathrooms are near the main room and a gym is also available for use. There is a 2,000 sq. ft. outside play area for the children. Two rooms in the lower level are used for lunch and rest time. Room B1 is used for eating lunch and The Chapel is used for rest and quiet time after lunch. This room is approximately 568 square feet and B1 is approximately 256 square feet. Two bathrooms are available in the hallway downstairs.

TELEPHONE

The preschool telephone number to be used during school hours is 978.422.8256. Parents should feel free to call or visit the Director at any time during school hours. If you are unable to reach someone at the preschool number, the church office (978.422.6657) may be called Monday - Friday from 9:00 AM until 3:30 PM and a message left with the church secretary. If you must reach one of our staff after these hours, please call the Director, Karen Ormsbee, at 978.422.7955 or 508.667.4394.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

On the Registration Form parents are asked to name two adults to be called in case of an emergency if a parent cannot be reached. A preferred physician and hospital should also be noted. In the case of an extreme emergency, the teacher will call the previously designated doctor, and if the doctor so directs, take the child to the indicated hospital. Should delay prove dangerous, the child will be taken directly to the hospital by the Sterling EMS, Inc. and the parents notified to meet the child and the teacher there. A copy of our school health care policy is posted on the parent's bulletin board during September and October and on page 12 of this Handbook.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

A non-refundable registration fee is required with the application for preschool enrollment. This fee is not applicable toward tuition. Registration is usually held on Thursday and Friday during the second week of January for the following school year. Applications may also be made any time after the formal registration as space available permits. Our staff to student ratio is 6.7:1 with a maximum of 20 children allowed per class.

Acceptance is automatic unless a parent is notified of waiting list status. Developmental History Questionnaire and Transportation Plan were provided to parents in late June and due by mid-July. A Medical Form (to be completed by the child's physician) is also required. Preschool begins the Monday after Labor Day. No child will be allowed to participate in our program until all forms are received.

TUITION and FEES

Tuition at the Village Green Preschool is set by the Parent Advisory Board in March prior to the start of a new school year. Every attempt is made to keep tuition payments stable, with annual increases generally less than 3% per year. All parents are given written notice of the new tuition rate for September in April. **All tuition payments are non-refundable** and due in three installments: May 1st, November 1st and February 1st or monthly. Prompt payment is necessary as the budget is planned on a predetermined income. Failure to remit will result in temporary suspension. Tuition payments may be made in person at the preschool or by mail using PO Box 40, Sterling, MA 01564. Any questions or concerns regarding tuition should be addressed to the Director.

A non-refundable enrollment fee is due at the time of registration and is not applicable toward tuition. Supervised 'Lunch Bunch' is included for students who attend school for four or more hours per day (lunches are not provided by the school.) There is a small daily fee for students who attend Lunch Bunch but are in school for less than four hours per day. Lunch Bunch will be billed bi-monthly for those families. There is a monthly fee for 'Before School' and 'After School' care which is due at the beginning of each month. Before School and After School care are offered as an option for parents who need additional care outside of our regular school day. Additional fees related to field trips will be relayed to families via email and the parent newsletter in advance of the trip and collected at greeting time. Field trip fees will be refunded if cancelled due to inclement weather.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline will be consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of each child. It will emphasize a positive approach to managing behavior. It will be directed toward the goal of maximizing the growth and development of each child and toward protecting the group and individuals in it.

- Physical punishment or psychological abuse or coercion is never used
- No child will be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse
- No child will be denied food as a form of punishment
- No child will be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet
-

Each child will be told the appropriate limits for certain behaviors. If some behavior becomes inappropriate, the child will be helped to understand the consequences of his/her behavior. For example, a child who continuously knocks down another child's building must leave the block area for two or three minutes and may rejoin the group when he/she realizes that the behavior is unacceptable. The child may be asked to have "quiet time" to sit and look at a book or wait until he/she feels ready to join in again. After repeated incidents without cooperation from the child, the teacher will speak to the parents regarding the problem behavior to solicit their ideas and support in managing the child's behavior. Parents are encouraged to be active participants in this process and their input in solving behavioral issues is greatly valued. Every attempt is made to find a mutually satisfying solution.

SCHOOL HOURS

Four sessions are currently offered at the preschool. Our morning sessions are offered on Tuesday/Thursday mornings and Monday/Wednesday/Friday mornings from 9:00 AM until 11:30 AM and Tuesday/Thursday afternoons and Monday/Wednesday/Friday afternoons from 12:30 PM until 3:00 PM. Before school care is offered for a small additional fee from 8:00-9:00 AM and after school care from 3:00-4:00 PM. The school year begins the Monday after Labor Day and ends the Friday before Memorial Day. The holiday and vacation calendar coincides approximately with the Wachusett Regional School District School Calendar.

VILLAGE GREEN PRESCHOOL CALENDAR

VGP generally follows the Wachusett Regional School District (WRSD) calendar for holiday and vacation closings with additional time at Thanksgiving, in December and Good Friday. We do not close for WRSD professional development days but do for snow days.

Village Green Preschool 2023-2024 CALENDAR

- Letterfinder Days
- Holiday/Vacation Closing
- Family Event
- VGPlay Day (optional)
- Wear A Color
- Special In-Class Activity
- Dress-Up Day

September 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

- 11** First day for MWF (parent coffees)
- 12** First day for TuTh (parent coffees)
- 21 & 22** Letterfinder – L
- 28 & 29** Clearview Farm Field Trip

October 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- 5 & 6** Letterfinder - T
- 6** Family Night
- 9** Indigenous People's Day
- 12 & 13** Letterfinder – D
- 12 & 13** School Photos
- 14** Family Photos
- 19 & 20** Letterfinder – O
- 19 & 20** Wear Orange
- 23** Spookywalk
- 26 & 27** Halloween Parade
- 26 & 27** Letterfinder - U
- 31** Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

- 1,2,3** Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 2 & 3** Letterfinder - F
- 8 & 9** Letterfinder – Y
- 8 & 9** Wear Yellow
- 10** Veterans Day
- 16 & 17** Letterfinder – S
- 16 & 17** Friendship Feast
- 20 & 21** VGPlay Day (optional)
- 20-24** Thanksgiving Break
- 30** Wear White
- 30** Letterfinder – A

December 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

- 1** Wear White
- 1** Letterfinder - A
- 5 & 6** Wear Pajamas
- 14 & 15** Holiday Programs 11 AM - ALL Classes
- 18, 19, 20** VGPlay Day (optional)
- 18 - 29** Holiday Break

January 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

- 1** New Year's Day
- 4 & 5** Letterfinder – N
- 11 & 12** Letterfinder – B
- 11 & 12** Wear blue
- 15** M.L. King Day
- 18 & 19** Letterfinder – W
- 25 & 26** Letterfinder - J
- 25 & 26** Wear Beach clothing

February 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

- 1 & 2** Letterfinder – C
- 8 & 9** Letterfinder – R
- 8 & 9** Wear Red
- 13 & 14** Valentine Exchange
- 15 & 16** Letterfinder - H
- 19-23** February Break
- 29** Letterfinder - Q

March 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

- 1** Letterfinder - Q
- 5 & 6** Wear shirt from vacation
- 7 & 8** Letterfinder – V
- 9** Spring Fling
- 14 & 15** Letterfinder – G
- 14 & 15** Wear Green
- 21 & 22** Letterfinder – M
- 27 & 28** Letterfinder - E
- 29** Good Friday

April 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

- 4 & 5** Letterfinder – P
- 4 & 5** Wear Purple
- 11 & 12** Letterfinder – Z
- 11 & 12** PM radKIDS Simulation
- 15-19** April Break
- 25 & 26** Farmland Field Trip
- 30** Parent-Teacher Conference

May 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

- 1,2,3** Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 2 & 3** Letterfinder – X
- 9 & 10** Letterfinder – K
- 9 & 10** Field Days - @ Town Common
- 16 & 17** Letterfinder - Ii
- 16 & 17** Wear Pink
- 23** Last Day of school – TuTh Recognition Day program 11 AM - ALL Classes
- 24** Last Day of School – MWF Recognition Day program 11 AM - ALL Classes
- 27** Memorial Day
- 28-30** VGPlay Days (optional)

June 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

- 3-7** Adventure Camp Week I (Optional)
- 10-14** Adventure Camp Week II (Optional)

(Additional events or field trips may be scheduled and we will make every effort to give parents ample notice.)

A typical, yet flexible (times are approximate) schedule at Village Green Preschool would be:

ARRIVAL/GREETING TIME (15 min.)

Hang up own jackets, teachers greet children, names on attendance board, informal play

CIRCLE: MEETING TIME (10 min.)

Introduce "Star of the Week", discuss theme and activities for the day, songs

CHOICE TIME I (25 min.)

Curriculum activities, dramatic play, block building, books, manipulative games and toys, puzzles, puppets, play dough, sensory table, discovery table, cooking

CIRCLE: STORY TIME (10 min.)

White board stories, books, dramatizations, songs

CHOICE TIME II (45 min.)

Creative art, crafts, writing center, snack and curriculum games, as well as activities listed above under Choice Time I

CLEAN-UP (5 min.)

Everyone helps

CIRCLE: SONGS/MOVEMENT (10 min.)

Conversation, show and tell, rhythmic expression, songs, fingerplays, dance

OUTDOOR/GROSS MOTOR SKILLS (30 min.)

Independent dressing for outdoors, group games, large balls, climbing, obstacle course, yoga, balance beam, simple exercises, moving to music - running, hopping, galloping, jumping,

DISMISSAL

MONTHLY CLASS CALENDAR

A class calendar will be prepared by the teachers and sent home the last school day prior to the period to be covered. It will inform parents of specific themes, art activities, books, songs, and projects in each class.

NEWSLETTER

A monthly newsletter helps to keep parents in touch with our various activities at preschool. Be sure to read your newsletter carefully and keep it handy for easy reference throughout the year. Also check the white board and parent's bulletin board in the foyer outside of the classroom for information and upcoming events. If you have an item of interest you would like included in the newsletter or posted on the parent's bulletin board, please speak to the Director.

CURRICULUM

Our preschool curriculum follows the Massachusetts Early Childhood Program Standards which were intended to meet or exceed the accreditation standards of the NAEYC. The Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences which we follow are based on the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The Guidelines interpret the Frameworks' learning standards incorporating the developmental needs of preschool-age children and include ideas for teachers in designing the environments and learning activities from which children form the foundation of academic learning.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

All family members dropping off children at preschool are asked to sign-in their child upon arrival utilizing the sign-in/sign-out sheet on the white board in the preschool foyer. They are then asked to bring their child directly into the classroom where they are greeted by the Director (at the door) and teaching staff (once inside the classroom). Family members should exit the room using the door at the far end of the classroom. The best strategy is to let your child know that you are excited to hear all about their day when they get home and then leave promptly. Please leave your child with a teacher if they happen to be upset. In many cases, an upset child will become engaged within minutes. It is best not to linger as it can create greater separation issues in the long run.

Procedures for Early Dismissal and After School (Late) Pickup are the same as the regular preschool day.

Safety considerations are always our primary concern with the use of an appropriate car seat, based on a child's height and weight encouraged. Parking is available to the left of the church, around the Town Common, in the lot adjacent to the library and at the town hall on Park Street. Please exercise great caution when crossing intersections and try to utilize crosswalks when available. Universally accessible parking and ramp access are available for those who need it.

At the end of the day, children are gathered as a group and then dismissed individually by staff to a waiting parent or caregiver at the playground gate. When unable to go outdoors, an inside dismissal routine is followed where children are released individually to the first waiting parent in line at the classroom door. Family members must sign out their child before leaving the preschool. Please be prepared to show identification at the beginning of the school year and for anyone the teachers do not recognize as having picked up your child before. If someone different will be picking up your child on a specific day, please provide a written note or electronic communication with the name of the person and their relationship to the child.

SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

Village Green Preschool will cancel school because of stormy weather whenever the Wachusett Regional School District (WRSD) cancels. A delayed opening of the WRSD/Sterling Public Schools, will indicate that our AM session will be canceled. If the WRSD/Sterling Public Schools close early, there will be no preschool for the PM session. Cancellation notices are aired on WTAG (580 AM), several local TV stations and online at TheBostonChannel.com. You may be able to sign up to receive automated cancellation messages through a few different sources. If the weather seems threatening on a day which has been scheduled for an outdoor activity or class trip, any change in plans will be sent by email to parents as well as a message left on the preschool answering machine after 8:30 AM (978.422.8256)

ILLNESS

Given the unstable viral environment, your child MUST stay home if they have any symptoms of COVID or flu. If your child is not feeling well or if your child has any of these symptoms, please keep him/her home to recover. Please see 'Health Care Policy' at end of document for more information.

- a fever is present
- medication that affects performance has been administered
- diarrhea is present or child has had diarrhea within 24 hours of the start of school
- vomiting is present or child has vomited within 24 hours of the start of school
- a rash exists
- a child is fussy, cranky, or generally not him/herself
- a child has a runny nose, reddened or oozing eyes, sore throat, headache, or stomachache
- a communicable disease is present

If a child becomes ill at preschool, a parent or caregiver indicated on the Registration Form will be notified to pick up the child. Every attempt will be made to isolate the child in a quiet spot until someone arrives.

Please be sure to notify the preschool immediately if your child has a communicable disease or if he/she returns to school on any medication.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from preschool on any given day, please call or email the school to inform us. If you need to pick up your child for an early dismissal please write a note or call the school ahead of time.

WITHDRAWAL

If a child must withdraw, a letter should be sent to the Director as soon as possible. No adjustments can be made for illness or absence. All tuition payments are non-refundable.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents may volunteer* to share a hobby, collection, musical or artistic talent, or demonstrate their livelihood for the children. Also, parents who wish to assist with special art projects, cooking, storytelling etc. are always welcome! Any parent/grandparent/family member participation in the classroom is always encouraged but should be prearranged. Sign-up sheets for parent volunteers are posted monthly on the white board outside of the classroom. We ask parents of morning preschoolers to wait until the beginning of October to volunteer in the

classroom. We also ask that if your child is having an especially difficult time adjusting to their new routine, to speak with your child's teacher as to the best course of action regarding classroom volunteering. Please inform the school of any home situation or problem that may affect your child's day at preschool.

Volunteers will not be left alone with a child or group of children. We ask all volunteers to allow the teachers to manage an upset child or handle any discipline within the classroom. Adults should always ask a child for permission to touch them and, unless it is a life-threatening emergency, should be limited to providing assistance (for example helping to climb up the loft ladder.)

PARENT OPEN HOUSE

An Open House for prospective parents considering September enrollment, will be held each year in early January. Teachers will be available to answer questions and describe our program.

SPECIAL CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Village Green Preschool tentatively plans a holiday program for children and their parents each year before the Holiday break. There will also be a special "Recognition Day" program at the end of the school year in May for parents and friends (these dates are noted in the school calendar above.) This program generally consists of favorite songs and fingerplays from the previous school year performed by the children. Refreshments for programs are provided by volunteer parents or by the preschool.

SNACK

A snack schedule is sent to all parents prior to the start of the school year. For each class your child attends, each parent is asked to provide several snacks for the class during the course of the year. There are also times when the children will prepare their own snacks (cooking days!) at preschool. The children eat together, serve themselves and pour their own water. Nutritious snacks such as cut-up fruits (grapes cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ lengthwise), small muffins, cheese sticks, whole grain crackers/cereals, vegetable sticks, granola/fruit bars, yogurt tubes (frozen work great!) are recommended. If your child has any food allergies, please notify the Lead Teacher. The snack is posted daily on the cork board in the foyer. Please remember that we are a **nut-free school** so snacks should not include peanuts or nuts of any kind, including nut butters. If purchasing a pre-packaged snack, please check the label for hidden nut products. Also, it is best to bring in a larger bag or box (goldfish, pretzels, etc.) as opposed to individual bags of snack – we find that a lot will be wasted in food and extra packaging. If you bring applesauce or fruit cups, please also provide spoons.

BIRTHDAYS

All birthdays (half-birthdays for summer birthdays!) will be celebrated at preschool. You will receive an email a few days before your child's birthday or half-birthday 'celebration.' We feel that it is important for your child to feel special when their birthday approaches. We do our best to schedule their 'celebration' as close to their birth date or half-birth date as possible. Your child will decorate a birthday crown; we take a photo of him/her wearing their crown; we give you a printed photo that is attached to commemorative paper; we sing him/her our own special Birthday song and he/she gets to eat at the snack table first using a special birthday placemat! We know it is tempting to send in a sweet treat, but there are many other fun, healthy options.

LUNCH BUNCH

During the forty-five minutes between our morning and afternoon sessions (11:30 AM - 12:30 PM) children from either session may have lunch at preschool, however priority is given to families with siblings in a morning and afternoon class and children in the afternoon classes. Lunch Bunch is offered for a small daily fee and billed periodically. Places at "Lunch Bunch" may be reserved ahead or used on a space available basis. As with snacks, peanut/tree nut products are never allowed at lunch bunch.

FIELD TRIPS

Advance written notice concerning all field trips will be given to parents. Due to current child passenger safety laws which require all children to be fastened securely in an appropriately styled car seat for height and weight, our field trips will involve parents driving their own child to a specific destination. Parents may also make their own carpool arrangements with other preschool parents. Usually, one fall trip and one spring trip are planned each year. If there are any fees associated with a field trip, parents will be notified via email and money collected at greeting time. If a field trip must be cancelled due to weather, fees will be refunded.

TRANSPORTATION & CARPOOLING

Transportation to preschool is provided by parents. A class list is available to help parents in making carpool arrangements. Please notify the Director of all carpools in writing. A current list of these will be posted at the preschool. Children are sent home with the specified driver, according to this list, unless prior notification is given. Drivers should escort the children in their care to the preschool classroom (Room 1.) Parents should also be aware that the children are not to leave the school until they are dismissed by one of the teachers. Drivers should insist that all children walk with them to and from the cars. Drivers are also responsible to inform parents of the children in their care of any current white board or bulletin board notices (snap a quick pic with your smartphone!)

FIRE SAFETY

Regular monthly evacuation drills are held to acquaint the children with the proper procedure for safely leaving the church building during an emergency. The children are led through eight different evacuation routes and not all evacuation drills will be announced to the children.

TOILETING AND HANDWASHING

To prevent the spread of disease and infection, children are encouraged to frequently wash their hands during the day at preschool (after playing with water, paint, glue, play dough, etc., before snack time and after visiting the bathroom.) The children use foam soap and running water and disposable paper towels. Independence is encouraged in the bathroom with toileting as well as with fastening clothing. Although it is recommended that all children be toilet trained before entering preschool, it is not a requirement for admission.

PETS - HOBBIES - TOYS

Visits from pets are welcome, but need to be prearranged with the Lead Teacher. A parent must also accompany all visiting pets. Hobbies, collections and demonstrations are also welcome but must be prearranged with the Lead Teacher. Notifying the teachers in advance of these special occasions gives them an opportunity to adequately plan for such a visit and determine the most appropriate and convenient time.

Stuffed animals and other toys are not always easily shared by the children, so it is best to keep toys at home. If a toy is brought to school, the child is asked to keep it in his/her cubby until dismissal time. Some children have difficulty when they cannot use someone else's toy or stuffed animal. Also, at dismissal it can be confusing and upsetting if a toy should be lost or misplaced. The following toys are NEVER allowed in the classroom: guns, war toys and in general any toys destructive or aggressive in nature.

SHOW & TELL

.Show & Tell is held a few times throughout the school year. Actual dates and suggested themes are listed in the individual class calendars. Children are encouraged to share anything they have at home that relates to a particular theme being developed in class *except* anything too large, fragile or with great sentimental value (a photograph of the object is a great alternative!) As noted above, items violent or aggressive in nature are not allowed. During Show & Tell each child will be given an opportunity to introduce themselves, talk about their special item and others will be encouraged to ask questions and provide comments.

LETTERFINDERS

Each week during circle time at preschool, a new letter is introduced at random (not in alphabetical order.) This special letter is noted on the parent calendars on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We talk about how to write the letter, practice the sound/s that it makes, and we think of some words that begin with that letter. We use the letter in easel, art and writing center projects. During every theme, we develop a language activity that addresses all of these things, too! We hope to encourage the development of letter recognition and letter sounds outside of preschool as well. To foster the home-school connection, on Thursdays and Fridays we ask the children to bring in something that begins with the letter of the week (as with Show & Tell items, we do not want anything too big coming into preschool nor anything depicting aggression or violence of any kind.) Letterfinders will be discussed in small groups at greeting time and dates will be noted on the class calendars. We have had some very creative things come in for letterfinders!

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent conferences will be held twice a year in November and May. Both of these conferences include a written evaluation that will be given to the parent and kept in the child's file. Conferences afford parents and teachers an opportunity to discuss the progress and development of each child. Unscheduled conferences may also be requested with teachers at any time during the school year. Parents always have the right to read any file kept on their own child. Teachers are instructed to keep all personal information on children confidential and to maintain a professional manner in dealing with parents at all times.

TOTE BAG OR BACKPACK

A backpack or tote bag is required every day for carrying home projects, notices and other belongings. In your child's bag each day, we ask parents to include a change of clothes (including diaper or pull-up, if needed) along with an extra zippered bag for soiled clothes so that we will be prepared for any accidents, paint or water spills that may occur. **ALL** clothing needs to be labeled with your child's name and please change/replace clothing with the seasons. During the winter months, it is recommended that winter gear be brought to school in a separate reusable bag that is labeled with your child's name.

CLOTHING

Children's clothes should be washable and very comfortable – we can get pretty messy so it may be a good idea to save the 'nice' clothes for another day. All clothing should be easy for children to handle by themselves (think about their ability to handle ties, buttons, buckles, snaps, etc.) Please label any clothing that is to be taken off such as sweaters, coats, mittens, boots, scarves, hats, etc. There is a "Lost and Found Box" in the Preschool Office. Be sure to check it regularly for any articles you may be missing.

The children will play with paint, glue, water, etc. and occasionally accidents will happen when a change of clothing is necessary. All parents are asked to send a change of clothes for their child in a labeled bag to be kept in tote bags or backpacks for just such emergencies.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's Lead Teacher first concerning issues or difficulties that may come up in the classroom. If the situation cannot be resolved and for all other matters which impact the program as a whole, the Director should be notified. Additionally, parents always have the opportunity to discuss any concerns they might have with either their designated room parent or any Parent Advisory Board member.

SOCIAL SERVICE REFERRAL POLICY

Any staff member who observes behavior that may warrant a referral will note such behaviors using an anecdotal record format and share this information with the class Lead Teacher. The Lead Teacher in turn will share this information with the Director. The child's file (including ASQ results and parent completed Developmental History) will also be reviewed at this time to see if there are any issues relevant to the current behavioral observations.

A meeting will be scheduled by the Director with the child's parents, at which time the parents will be provided with a written statement including the reason for recommending a referral, a brief summary of the observations made, and any efforts made by the preschool to accommodate the child's needs. The preschool office maintains a current list of community referral sources. Parents will be encouraged to call the appropriate referral agency and request an evaluation. If a child is at least three years of age, the Director will inform the child's parents of the availability of services and their rights, including their right to appeal, under MA Chapter 766. If a child is under the age of three, parents will be informed of local Early Intervention Programs.

The Director, with parental permission, will contact the referral agency in order to coordinate their findings with meeting the child's needs at preschool. A written record of any referrals, including the parent conference and its outcome will be kept in the child's file folder. Every effort will be made to meet the individual needs of each child enrolled and to insure their continued successful participation in the program.

TERMINATION PLAN

Village Green collaborates with Together for Kids, Worcester, MA which provides direct mental health consulting services for both teachers and children in Central MA. These services are available to all children and staff at the

preschool. Occasionally however, it is determined to be in a child's best interest to be terminated from the program for one or both of the following reasons:

- the health and safety of the child at preschool cannot be assured
- the child's developmental needs are not able to be met in the preschool setting

Prior to termination, parents are requested to attend a meeting with the Director, Lead Teacher and any other appropriate teacher to determine the best course of action. We will assist parents in obtaining support services and will develop a plan for intervention within the school and at home. Parents will be notified in writing and in a face to face meeting about the reasons for termination. A copy of this letter will be kept in the child's folder. The Director will inform parents of appropriate additional referral services available to them. When any child is terminated from preschool, the Lead Teacher will talk to the children giving a clear, direct reason for the departure.

RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCES

A policy of respect and tolerance is followed when school and family values and practices differ. Every effort will be made to support accommodation, cooperation and compromise when needed.

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Information about children is gathered from numerous sources: the Developmental History completed by parents prior to enrollment; scoring of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire in September; ongoing classroom observations and anecdotal records; children's work samples; developmental checklists; and conversations with children and their parents. This information is then organized and interpreted by teachers to inform effective curriculum planning and to individualize teaching strategies with the intended goal of maximizing each child's early learning experience at Village Green Preschool. Ongoing assessment information is shared with parents throughout the year and at scheduled parent conferences in November and May.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All child screening and assessment records are considered highly confidential. They are kept in a locked file cabinet in the preschool office. Access to these records is limited to the designated staff member assigned to monitor a particular child's development and progress throughout the year, to the Lead Teacher of the child's class and to the Preschool Director. Parents have the right to access information in their child's file at any time by notifying the Director. Assessment and screening records are used by teaching staff to develop curriculum that will best meet the individual needs of each child to aid in their growth and development.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We always welcome parent input and we feel that communication is vital to a successful program and preschool experience. We encourage you to contact the Director by phone or email or contact a P.A.B member with any questions or concerns. For security reasons, the preschool door is locked throughout the day. If you need to access the classroom for any reason, please stop in at the Preschool Office first and the Director will take you to the classroom. Due to concerns regarding the spread of illness, parents will not be allowed to linger in the classroom or at the back door. In addition, all volunteers need to be vaccinated and wear a mask. Depending on control of the COVID virus and its variants, we may need to make changes to this policy.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Families are given an opportunity each year in May to evaluate all aspects of the program. Results of this evaluation are shared with families. They often raise awareness of areas in need of improvement and also form the basis for future program development.

STAFF

All teachers at Village Green Preschool are certified by the Massachusetts Dept. of Early Education and Care and/or have taken the required course in Child Growth and Development. They have had experience working in a preschool setting and have an understanding and respect for young children. Teachers are expected to provide appropriate activities for the emotional, social, physical and cognitive development of each child. Each month teachers attend staff training sessions and hold staff meetings to develop and share curriculum activities.

Director - Karen Ormsbee

...has a B.S. degree in Merchandising, Consumer Studies and Design from the University of Vermont and both a B.A. and M.A. in Landscape Architecture from Iowa State as well as her MA lead teacher and Director certifications in early childhood education. She spent one year as a teacher at University Child Care in New Mexico and has been teaching at VGP for the past 18 years. Karen has two daughters (both VGP grads) and lives with her family in Sterling.

Assistant Director & Lead Teacher (MWF) – Jillian McAlevey

...has a B.S. degree in Fashion Marketing and Business from Immaculata University in Pennsylvania and is pursuing the necessary coursework for her MA lead teacher certification in early childhood education. This is Jillian's eighth year as a Teacher and fourth as Lead Teacher, she served on the Parent Advisory Board and has previously worked with children on mission trips and as a swimming instructor. She has a son (VGP grad!) and lives with her family in Leominster.

Co-Teacher (MWF) – Kaiya Correia

...has a Bachelor's degree from Bridgewater State University in Special Education with a Concentration in Communication Disorders. Kaiya joined the VGP community as a parent in 2021, served on the Parent Advisory Board and is a new member of the teaching team for 2023. Before VGP, she worked at a Special Education school for almost a decade and after having children of her own provided private childcare in her home. She has two children (one VGP grad and one currently enrolled student) and lives in the neighboring town of Clinton.

Co-Teacher (MWF & TuTh) – Lori Schoolcraft

...has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Plymouth State College and a master's degree in Elementary Education from Rivier College. Lori joined VGP toward the end of the 2021-22 school year and has over ten years of teaching experience. She has also served on the Parent Advisory Board and as a substitute teacher at VGP. Lori is Yoga and Reiki certified and has already incorporated mindfulness and body awareness into our program. She has two older children, two beautiful grandchildren and lives in Sterling with her son, Maddox, who is a VGP alum!

Lead Teacher (TuTh) – Caitlyn Candiello

... has a Bachelor's and Master's degree from Fitchburg State University in Elementary Education with a minor in English Literature. Caitlyn joined VGP in 2021 and this is her first year as Lead Teacher. Before joining VGP, she was a stay-at-home mom for many years. Prior to that she taught fifth grade for seven years, tutored children in various grade levels and was a substitute teacher. She has four children (three VGP grads) and lives with her family in Princeton.

Co-Teacher (TuTh) – Amanda Stevens

...received her Bachelors of Science in Business Administration and Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education from Liberty University (VA) and has been teaching dance to 2-8 year-olds at MEM Dance Theatre (formally Paula Meola Dance) for ten years. This is Amanda's third year as a co-teacher at VGP. She has served as a Parent Advisory Board member, parent volunteer and substitute teacher at VGP. Her two younger brothers attended VGP and then two of her children attended. Amanda has a son and two daughters and lives with her family in West Boylston.

Village Green Preschool Health Care Policy

(No direct entry to the classroom is allowed. All visitors need to check in at the office first and the Director will escort them to the classroom.)

(A) Emergency telephone numbers:

Health Care Consultant – 978.660.8426 (Audrey Learned, RN, 26 Kilmurray St, Clinton, MA)
Sterling Police, Fire, Ambulance/Rescue - 911
Poison Information Center – 800.682.9211 (Boston Children's Hospital)
Emergency Health Care – 978.368.3000 (Clinton Hospital)
508.334.1000 (UMass/Memorial)
Designated Adult – 978.422.8256 (Karen Ormsbee)

(B) Procedures for emergencies and illness:

In case of illness parent is called to pick up child; if unable to reach parent, contacts listed on emergency card are called.

In case of emergency, first aid is administered by certified staff, while other staff calls parents, EMS (ambulance) and designated physician, if needed (transportation via ambulance to hospital)

Field trips when parents are not in attendance - same procedures are followed as outlined above for illness and emergency.

(C) Procedures for using and maintaining first aid equipment:

One first aid kit is kept on the top shelf of the teacher cabinet in the classroom and the other is hung on the inside of the playhouse on the playground. Lead Teachers check first aid kits regularly to keep adequately supplied.

A first aid kit is brought on field trips by the Director. First aid is administered by the Lead Teacher in attendance, one of the co-teachers or the Director.

(D) Plan for evacuation of center in emergency:

The Lead Teacher guides the children out of the building to safety aided by the first co-teacher following at the end of the line. The second co-teacher checks the playhouse, loft, bathroom, under the desk and the classroom in general for stragglers; takes the attendance book, closes doors and follows the children out. The designated "safe location" and gathering place is the Sterling Library parking lot adjacent to the First Church building, unless instructed otherwise by emergency personnel.

In the event of security threats, utility failure or natural disaster teaching staff will follow a lock down of the classroom; call 911; or contact parents (utilizing information on emergency cards) depending on the specific circumstance of the situation.

Staff cell phones or the classroom phone will be used for communication purposes.

The Lead Teacher is responsible for assuring that evacuation drills are held at different times of the program day and are practiced with all groups of children at least once a month. The Lead Teacher maintains documentation of the date, door used and outcome for each evacuation drill.

(E) Injury prevention plan:

The Lead Teacher is responsible for monitoring the safety of the preschool environment and bringing to the attention of the Director any need for the repair or removal of hazards. Teaching staff are assigned to monitor specific pieces of equipment where injury might occur. Obstacle free fall zones around all climbing equipment are maintained and covered with impact absorbing material: inside – rubber mat; outdoor – playground mulch.

A central injury log is maintained and monitored by the Lead Teacher under the supervision of the Director. This log is kept in the back of the curriculum planning book on the classroom desk. Injury report forms are kept in the top drawer of the classroom file cabinet. Parents are to be informed immediately of any injury which requires emergency care beyond first aid. Parents are also to be informed in writing of any first aid administered to their child within 24 hours of the incident. An injury report for any accident which requires first aid or emergency care shall be maintained in the child's file. An injury report shall include, but not be limited to: name of child, date, time and location of accident or injury, description of injury and how it occurred, names of witnesses, names of persons who administered first aid or medical care and first aid or medical care required.

(F) Plan for managing infectious diseases:

Parents are advised not to send children to school who exhibit symptoms of infectious diseases: i.e. chicken pox, impetigo, scabies, etc. as well as excessive runny nose, deep and frequent coughing, vomiting and diarrhea. If children become noticeably ill at school, parents are called and asked to come pick up their child. If a child is ill, he/she is separated from the rest of the children and cared for by a staff member until the parent arrives. In order to minimize the spread of infectious diseases children are reminded to cough or sneeze into their elbow and to wash hands before cooking and eating. If a communicable disease has been introduced into the center, a notice to that effect is posted immediately on the parent's white board and/or an email is sent to parents.

Children are allowed to return to preschool after an illness according to the following guidelines:

- Chickenpox - one week after rash begins or when all chickenpox are scabbed over
- COVID – see guideline below
- Diarrhea - when the child no longer has diarrhea
- Diarrheal Diseases (Shigella, Campylobacter, Salmonella, Giardia) - when the Health Dept. deems it is safe
- Head Lice – doctor's note that no live lice, eggs or nits are present
- Hepatitis A - one week after illness begins
- Measles - five days after rash appears
- Mumps - after swelling subsides or nine days after swelling begins
- Pneumonia, epiglottitis or infectious acute arthritis (if not due to H-flu) – when attending physician deems it is safe
- Pneumonia, epiglottitis or infectious acute arthritis (if due to H-flu) - when the Health Dept. deems it is safe
- Rubella - five days after rash appears
- Scabies – doctor's note that no body lice are present
- Spinal Meningitis - when the Health Dept. deems it is safe
- Strep Throat - 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun
- Whooping Cough - four weeks after intense coughing begins, or five days after antibiotic treatment has begun

(G) Plan for infection Control:

All staff and children need to wash their hands upon arrival (staff), after toileting, before food preparation and before eating. Staff must use disposable plastic gloves when preparing non-packaged foods at snack time. Specified equipment and surfaces to be washed daily with a disinfectant solution include but are not limited to: toilet and toilet seat, sink and faucet, water play equipment, play tables and floor.

(H) Plan for meeting the individual needs of mildly ill children:

If a child is mildly ill a parent is called. If a parent cannot be reached, both emergency numbers are called. If no one can be reached in this way, the child is allowed to rest quietly (apart from the other children) on the sofa or rocking chair in the book corner with a qualified staff member monitoring.

(I) Plan for administering medication:

Preschool sessions are only 2 ½ hours long therefore the only medication dispensed at Village Green Preschool is in response to an allergic reaction of a child.

Staff administering medication have had specific training and a written performance evaluation updated annually by the Health Care Consultant.

All medications must be labeled with the child's first and last name; date prescription was filled; name of child's health care provider; expiration date of medication; instructions that detail the name and strength of the medication; and instructions on how to administer and store it.

A specific medical directive from the child's pediatrician as well as written permission from the child's parent for administering the medication must be on file and kept with the medication. All used and unused medications are returned to the parent.

(J) Plan for meeting specific health care needs:

Parents are asked to list any allergies their child might have at the time of enrollment. The names of children who have allergies along with their specific allergies are posted in the area of the classroom where snack is served.

(K) Procedure for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF):

Signs of abuse to look for would be unusual cuts or bruises or if a child's disposition becomes especially lethargic, despondent, or overly distraught. Observations should be discussed with the Director and noted in the child's folder. To file a report of suspected abuse or neglect, DSS should be called and a written report submitted within 48 hours. (Appropriate forms are available directly from DSS.) If a child is in immediate physical danger, local police should be called. ALL VGP STAFF ARE MANDATED REPORTERS. Any staff who report suspicions of child abuse and neglect are immune from disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious.

Allegations of abuse or neglect by staff members should be referred to the Director immediately. The Director will discuss allegations with the staff member in question and take appropriate action if necessary.

MA Dept. of Children and Families 617 748-2000 - 24 Hour Hotline 800 792-5200