



Parent Handbook

2020-2021

PROGRAM HOURS

Early Arrival:

Monday through Friday. **Doors open at 8:00 am.**

BearCub 2s Transitional Day:

Monday through Friday. **Doors open at 8:30 am.**

Pick-up is **12:30 pm.**

St. Columba School Day:

Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Doors open at 8:30 am.**

Pick-up is **2:30 pm.**

3:30 Club/Rest & Play:

Monday through Friday, 2:30 to 3:30 pm OR 5:00 pm.

Pick-up anytime between **2:30 and 5:00 pm.**

COMMUNICATION

Phones and email: The School Office number is (202) 742-1980. In addition to the Office phones, each classroom has a direct line and each staff member has a school-based email address that is listed in the first pages of the Directory. *In case of emergency, please call the Office and/or email school@columba.org.*

Attendance: If your child will be absent from school for illness or for any other reason, please call the School Office Number or email (school@columba.org) to let the Office know. We will pass along the message to the classroom teachers. If we do not hear from you, we may contact you to ask if all is well.

Please keep us informed of any major changes in your child's life – parents traveling, grandparents' visits, serious illness or death in the family, a missing pet, a new baby, etc., but keep in mind that teachers are asked to check their voicemail and email during appropriate times and may not be able to

respond right away. Once the school day begins, the classroom phones are usually set to roll directly to voicemail. **You should not leave any message that requires immediate attention or includes a change of carpool plans on the classroom phones.** For these messages, please call or email the Office.

Newsletters, email and websites: The Head of School sends regular Newsletters via email with information about the program, coming events, and community news.

The School's all-school parent email list is to be used only for school-issued messages including emergency notifications. The Directory is provided for the use and convenience of the Nursery School staff and families for school-related communication. The names, addresses, and contact information should not be shared outside the Nursery School community, nor should they be used for commercial or political purposes, or for charitable solicitations.

We will use a new application, "'brightwheel'" for teacher to parent communication. Teachers will send photos, information about your child and classroom events via "brightwheel."

Parent-to-Parent Communication: You will receive a copy of our Directory at the start of the school year with the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses for this year's St. Columba Nursery School families. This information is made available so that you may contact other families. Each class also has a room parent who will set up class email lists to communicate about class-specific topics.

Friday Bags: Each child will receive his or her own *Friday Bag* that will go home at the end of the week filled with art, treasures, informational flyers, and any School notices. Please make time to look over the week's work with your child. Sharing the contents of these bags with a parent, helps build a child's language skills and develop a sense of time and sequence as he/she recounts the events of the week. Please bring your *Friday Bag* back to school on Monday (or the next day you return to school).

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Two formal, scheduled conference opportunities are planned for Fall and Winter. At these conferences, teachers will provide you with verbal and written information regarding your child's experiences at school as well as his/her learning and development. Of course, teachers, and the Head of School or Assistant Head of School will make themselves available for a conference whenever parents feel one is needed. You may also be contacted by the School for a meeting outside of conferences and you may certainly request a conference at any time, should you wish to talk about your child's experiences at school.

Confidentiality: The school takes the confidentiality of student information seriously. We follow FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) guidelines regarding the dissemination of children's school records. Any record bearing identifying information for a child is maintained in locked rooms or cabinets, accessible only to necessary nursery school staff and licensing personnel. Should information about your child need to be shared with outside agencies or practitioners, the school has a permission letter that, when completed, allows outside agencies and the School to share information.

If you plan to apply to an independent school after St. Columba's, communication between schools regarding applicants is to be expected and does not require special permission.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

CARPOOL LINES AND PICK-UP ARE A CELL FREE ZONE

Drop-off parking: For those new to our carpool routine, we use the “kiss-and-ride” system because we find it makes the transition into school easier for children and gives us the opportunity to encourage independence in managing their belongings and learning our daily routines.

The parking lot is reserved for church and school staff only. **There are no visitors’ parking places available during school hours even for a short while (the only exception is Early Arrival families who may park briefly in the B-Side parking lot to drop off between 8:00 and 8:15 am if parking is available).** Bike racks and stroller parking are available for families commuting on two or three wheels.

Punctuality: It is very important that your child arrives on time. The morning start-up routines are among the most important of the day. *Arriving after the day’s action has begun is as hard for children as being the last to be picked up on more than an occasional basis.*

Carpool & Pick-Up: The school is required by DC licensing regulations to have on file a list of names of the people, other than parents, who are authorized to pick-up your child – for example, babysitters, friends in an emergency, visiting grandparents. If there are changes during the year, please email the Office with the update.

Arrival: If you are using Early Arrival, you may park in the B-Side parking lot or briefly in the carpool lane in order to walk your child to the main entrance.

AT 8:45 AM CARPOOL ENDS, THE TEACHERS RETURN TO THE CLASSROOMS, AND THE ALBEMARLE STREET DOOR IS LOCKED. **IF YOU ARRIVE AFTER 8:45 AM, PLAN TO PARK YOUR CAR ON THE STREET AND PROCEED TO THE OFFICE.**

Dismissal: Please have your carpool number visible in the window of your car. Teachers will identify your car, bring the children to it and buckle them in.

3:30 Club: Pick-up is by 3:30 pm. You may park in the neighborhood or pull into the B-side lot. Your child will be waiting on the carpool bench and will be brought out to your car as described in the pick up instructions for each class.

Rest & Play: Pick-up is any time between 2:30 and 5:00 pm. You may park briefly in the carpool lane or B-Side parking lot to call the office and sign your child out.

Carpool changes: **The School must be informed of any change in carpool pick-up plans in writing** (email is acceptable, but please ensure the email is sent to school@columba.org well before the assigned carpool time). Carpool changes and any other notes for teachers can be given to the arrival carpool staff. No child will be allowed to leave with anyone other than an authorized person without a

written note/email. **Please do not leave voicemail messages about carpool changes without also sending a confirmation email.** If the school is ever unsure about the dismissal arrangements, we will keep your child at school until we can reach an authorized contact.

Carpool safety: At drop-off and pick-up, a staff member will open the car door and assist children getting into and out of your vehicle. They will also fasten the buckles of children's safety seats before you depart. By law, all children must use an **approved child safety seat** and **may not be seated in the front seat** of any vehicle. **It is helpful if your child's seat can be on the rear, passenger side of the vehicle** so that carpool staff doesn't have to go out into the street or parking lot to help your child into and out of the car.

Approaching the school by car: Please remember, that all cars arriving for drop-off and pick-up must join the carpool line by approaching from 42nd Street (the up-hill (east) end). This applies to the A-side and B-side. A single carpool line allows for safer entrance into the parking lot, prevents blocked street traffic, and is mandated by local zoning officials. It also keeps our neighbors happy.

On the B-side, please remember to be courteous and leave a space for vehicles to enter and exit the driveway of our neighbors at Friendship Terrace while you are waiting to enter the School parking lot. If, when picking up on the A side, you find that cars in the Albemarle line are backed up to the corner, please drive around the block and rejoin the carpool line after some of the cars have departed. Blocking that intersection is a serious safety risk and might get you a ticket!

Whichever carpool line you are in, please pull as far forward into the parking lot or up along the curb so that we can fit as many cars as possible into the loading zone.

If you are late: We count on families to be on time nearly all of the time, but we know that traffic and emergencies do happen once in a while. If you are running late to pick up your child, please call the Office to let us know. Children awaiting late-arriving drivers at dismissal can be found in his or her classroom, please call the room number and a teacher will bring your child to you.

Please see the COVID Guide for more detailed instructions about pick-up and drop-off.

SCHOOL ROUTINE

Dressing for School: Dress your child in comfortable clothing suitable for an active program that includes lots of daily and often messy outdoor time. At St. Columba's, we do a lot of running and climbing, so we encourage children to wear sneakers to school each day for safety and comfort. Sandals, open-toed shoes, clogs, jellies, flip-flops, party flats, or shoes that may slip off, fill with sand or mulch, or provide less-than-optimal climbing and running stability are discouraged. Children are encouraged, however, to keep a pair of water-shoes (Keens, Crocs, Texas, rain boots, etc.) in their school cubby so we can play with hoses, puddles and other wet fun whenever we can.

Clothing is something many children form opinions about at an early age and often argue with parents over. Our philosophy is always, "Choose your battles, life is short." So, never feel you must wrestle

your child into “proper clothing” for our sake. We will happily assist them to make different clothing choices later in the morning if you will just bring what you think they need.

Also, our busy girls and boys do get dirty! We suggest they wear clothes that you don't mind getting muddy or stained. Check for fasteners that are easy for children to manipulate and boots that are large enough to pull on and off easily.

Most kids like to have a change of their own clothing at school, as clothes sometimes get wet or if an accident happens. We encourage you to put some extras in a zip-lock bag labelled with your child's name. Our school also keeps a supply of clean clothes that children can change into if they are wet and dirty. Please launder borrowed clothes and return them to the school at your earliest convenience. We do appreciate contributions to the supply, particularly of mittens, sweat pants, shorts, underwear, and socks.

Before getting your child dressed in the morning, please check the forecast and choose clothes with the following fact in mind: **our playgrounds are shady and usually several degrees colder than the reported Metropolitan temperature early in the day.** If you can, dress your child in layers that can be added to or removed as the weather changes. Please be certain outerwear is easy for your child to get on and off or easily manageable for the teachers to assist. Buttons, multiple zippers, extra jacket liners, and complicated fasteners make it difficult for children to manage by themselves. It is our goal to teach every child to get into and out of their outerwear independently, and ultimately, to zip up jackets and put on hats and mittens without assistance! We know they can do it.

We really do go outside for play in every kind of weather including rain and snow so boots and raincoats and/or heavy winter jackets, snow pants and warm boots are a must on cold, wet days!

ALL CLOTHING SHOULD BE CLEARLY MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME!

Inclement weather play policy: An exception to our “out-every-day” policy may be made for dangerous weather conditions (e.g., heat, thunderstorms, wind, or ice). The Office staff monitors weather conditions including the heat index, air quality and wind-chill factors daily to determine if, and for how long, children may safely be outdoors.

Weather-related closures and delayed openings: In the case of closing due to inclement weather, SCNS will contact you via "brightwheel" by 6:30 am. If you do not hear from us and suspect we may be closing, you may call the School Office (202.742.1980) after 6:30 am to hear a recorded message or check our website at www.stcolumbasnurseryschool.org.

On days when a delayed opening is necessary, we will open the doors at 10:00 am. There is no Early Arrival when we open late.

If conditions in your neighborhood are unsafe but we are open, please stay at home until the roadways improve. Your child's safety is much more important to us than his/her presence at school when travel is dangerous.

Closures for weather or other emergencies: Once school has opened for the day, we will strive to stay open. However, should weather conditions or some other emergency (such as loss of heat, power, or water) warrant closure, we will contact families via "brightwheel" to pick-up children as soon as we can.

In such situations, we ask that you or someone designated by you come as quickly as is possible to pick-up your child.

Should conditions in the building become unsafe and require evacuation beyond our playgrounds, (e.g., a fire emergency in bad weather), we have arrangements with neighboring Janney Elementary on Albemarle Street for off-site shelter until children can be picked by parents or other caregivers. **Please make sure that we always have your most current contact information on file in the Office at all times. If you are given a new cell phone number, please make sure to give it to the teachers/office.**

Snacks: We serve a simple, healthy snack at mid-morning and during Rest & Play accompanied by a cup of water. Our snacks might include crackers, fruits, vegetables, cheese, hummus or other healthy foods children enjoy. Talk with your child's teacher if you would like to send in snack for a special occasion (such as a child's birthday) but bear in mind that your choices may be restricted by allergies within the class or other prohibitions (see the Birthday Section below for more details).

Lunch: Children need to bring their lunches with them to school in the morning. We are unable to refrigerate or reheat lunches. Please pack your child's lunch in temperature-maintaining containers or in an insulated lunch box, and don't forget to pack utensils if they will be needed. Please also send a reusable water bottle. We discourage fruit juice boxes as children often drink them first and don't have enough room in their tummies for their "healthy food." We recommend packing 2-4 food options as more can be overwhelming. Further, please pack your child's lunch in containers they may open by themselves or learn to open.

Please see the COVID Guide for more information about Lunch and lunchtime procedures.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Life-threatening allergies: The Inclusion Coordinator and School Office will assist in the management of your child's life-threatening allergy while he/she is at school by providing teachers and staff written emergency-response procedures containing your child's picture and information about the allergy, its presenting symptoms, treatment actions recommended from your healthcare provider, and emergency contact information. If your child's allergy warrants it, please plan to provide the School with medicines required for emergency treatment, (e.g., an EpiPen, Benadryl, etc.) in a zip-closeable bag labeled with your child's name. We will also provide you with an action plan form to be filled out by your doctor and a medicine administration permission form for you to complete. We rely on you to work with us to keep your child safe at school by keeping us informed and supplied with what your child may need to be cared for in a medical emergency.

We maintain a **nut- and peanut-free environment** in classrooms at St. Columba's. We will also limit exposure to **gluten, casein, or other allergens** that can trigger certain children when we are aware of such sensitivities.

In the case of **food allergies or food sensitivities**, we will be happy to provide you with a list of the snack foods usually served at school including their ingredient labels for your approval. Anticipating that special snacks and birthday treats will frequently arrive in your child's classroom, **we ask that parents of children with allergies provide a container of non-perishable special treats or ones that can be frozen, to replace goodies whose ingredients are not known.** Teachers will not serve unapproved snacks to children with allergies nor will they send them home with the child for later consumption. These procedures follow the recommendations provided by the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network.

Sun and insects: If your child is sensitive to sun exposure or insect bites, please consider sending him or her in a hat and long sleeves during the early fall and late spring when these issues most often arise. **We ask that you plan to apply sunscreen and insect repellent products at home before school begins.** When applying both sunscreen and insect repellent, the sunscreen should be applied first. We can reapply these products at school when they are supplied by parents with written instructions.

Medicines: Ideally children taking medications should receive them at home before or after the school day. If your child has a condition (e.g., asthma, seizures, ADHD, etc.) that requires medication be administered during the school day, please contact the School's Inclusion Coordinator to ensure that all paperwork required by DC has been completed and that the appropriate staff has been given instructions on proper dosing and administration of medications. The Head of School and Assistant Head will ensure that medications are stored and administered properly.

Accidents and emergencies: Small accidents during the school day are treated with simple first aid such as washing with soap and water and applying band-aids and using icy "bump bottles." When possible, teachers will send home a "Bump & Bruise" note to make you aware of small injuries. In the case of a serious injury or illness that requires immediate medical attention, 911 will be called immediately and the parent notified.

Should a significant but non-emergency injury occur, parents will be called immediately and an Unusual Incident Report form will be completed, submitted to the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and maintained in the main office with the child's permanent record. The staff at St. Columba's is not permitted to transport any child for medical care. Please be sure that your emergency contact information on file in the Office is current and up-to-date at all times as well as contact information for others whom we might call if you cannot be reached. **Emergency contacts must be local.** OSSE will not accept forms which have emergency contacts who are not readily available in an emergency.

Diapering & Potty-Training Policies: The school follows the guidelines set forth by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and DC licensing guidelines set forth by DC Department of Health and Human Services on diapering and potty training.

- Staff should check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet/dirty at least every two hours.
- Diapers are changed immediately when discovered to be soiled or wet.
- Diapers/soiled clothing are only changed in designated areas.
- When placing a child on an elevated surface one hand is ALWAYS kept on the child.
- Gloves are worn whenever dealing with bodily excretions, but gloves are not a substitute for good hand washing following the process.
- Soiled clothing is placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or prolonged handling) and out of the reach of children to be sent home that day for laundering.
- Soiled diapers are disposed of immediately in a hands-free can with a lid.
- The changing table (and any soiled surface) is cleaned and sanitized immediately after use.
- Hand-washing sinks should not be used for removing smeared fecal material.
- When a child has been changed or is finished with toileting, wash hands using procedures outlined in the St. Columba's hand-washing policy.
- Staff members whose primary function is preparing food should not be involved in diapering until their food prep duties have been completed for the day.
- Diapers/diapering supplies are provided by the family and labeled accordingly with the child's name.

When parents ask if their child must be potty-trained to begin school, we tell them that most children are, but for those who are not, St. Columba's offers guidance to parents and assistance to children regarding potty-training (when appropriate). We find that most children potty train quickly after beginning school if they are showing signs of readiness like, announcing they are wet or soiled, seeking a "special place" to complete their voiding, or asking to sit on a potty chair or toilet like mommy or daddy. We visit the bathroom at regular, predictable intervals and ask all of the children to try, which also helps set the stage for being reliably trained.

School Access: The School space is securely separated from the Church by a keypad activated elevator panel and magnetic door locks. The street-side exterior entrance doors to each wing of the first floor have timed magnetic door locks to keep them secure during non-carpool hours. All Nursery School doors will be kept locked throughout the day to protect children. Staff members have key fobs for easy access.

Background Checks: All teachers and staff at the Nursery School are required to submit to background checks including FBI fingerprinting, a DCPD criminal records search, and the DC Child Protective Services Child Abuse registry search. These checks are repeated on a regular schedule established by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), our licensing body.

Fire Drills: Due to the Pandemic and an effort to minimize children in groups, Fire Drills are currently postponed and we will share with families when this policy is updated. In accordance with regulations from the DC Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (who completes our yearly fire inspections), fire drills are conducted monthly. In the event of a fire alarm or drill, teachers line up their students and complete a headcount prior to exiting the building. Upon exiting the building, teachers take with them the classroom first aid backpack containing copies of each child's emergency contact card and medications, as necessary. Teachers and children exit the building from the designated or nearest

building exit. All personnel and children travel to the bottom of the playground on the side of campus nearest to their exit point.

If there is no apparent smoke/fire, the Head (or other designated main office staff) will complete a building sweep on the Butterworth side of the building, closing doors as they check rooms. The Assistant Head will conduct the same sweep on the Albemarle side of the building. After the sweeps are complete, the Head of School will meet the teachers and children at the bottom of the playground to provide further instruction.

Smoke-free facility policy: St. Columba's Church and Nursery School are smoke-free facilities. In the interest of public health and the health and safety of our nursery school children St. Columba's playgrounds are also smoke-free at all times children are present.

Pet Policy: We love our classroom animals and believe that helping to care for animals is invaluable in teaching children empathy and caring for our world and all the creatures in it. With this in mind, our classrooms often have pets. While we want to make the school inviting and welcoming to varied pets, the health and safety of our students is our first priority. We adhere to the following guidelines regarding pets: classroom pets or visiting animals should appear to be in good health; and pets or visiting animals will have documentation from a vet or shelter verifying they are fully immunized (as required for that type of animal) and that they are suitable for contact with children. Teaching staff will always supervise interactions with animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals and, if a student has an allergy to an animal, contact with that animal will be avoided. Children will wash their hands after handling animals.

Additional Health & Safety policies for the school (such as supervision requirements, water play, etc.) exist. If at any time you would like to know more about these policies please feel free to contact the School's Office.

OTHER INFORMATION

Daily Programs: *Early Arrival* and *Rest & Play* are add-on programs that provide parents the option to have their child spend additional time at school – either before or after regular program hours.

Admission: Sharing your positive experiences at St. Columba's with your neighbors and friends helps to keep us fully enrolled and we truly appreciate your spreading the word.

Need-based financial assistance is available to help qualifying families with tuition. Applicants must submit an NAIS Schools & Student Services (SSS) application and, once the information is processed and tax information in hand, grants are determined by the Head of School and a member of the School's Board of Governors. All information is kept strictly confidential.

Enrollment Deposits: Once admitted to the Nursery School, parents submit an enrollment deposit to hold the child's place at school for the duration of the child's tenure (e.g., the child "graduates" or moves to another program). **Enrollment deposits will be refunded at the written request of the family to the Head of School or School Office Manager. Families will be reminded at**

re-enrollment time that, should they choose not to re-enroll, this request must be made. Refund checks are processed in June after the program year has finished and all outstanding fees and tuition, if any, have been collected. Any money owed to the school will be deducted from the enrollment deposit before refunding.

Applying out and future school placement: Families planning to apply their child to an independent school for either Pre-K or Kindergarten should begin scheduling visits to schools of interest and make an appointment for educational testing early in the fall. (Check with the admission offices for specifics.) The Head of School is happy to meet with families who wish to discuss this process and the variety of school options for their child. The Office is happy to share information about educational testers with whom we have worked successfully.

After you have applied to a school or schools, please provide the Office with a written list of schools to which you'd like recommendations to be sent. The Office will arrange for your child's teachers to complete an Independent School Recommendation Common Form and narrative about your child and send them out to the schools to which you are applying.

Most schools have an early January deadline for new applicants but many have much earlier application dates for siblings of current students. Please help us be timely in submitting recommendations by letting us know as early in the process as possible about your plans.

Families intending to send a child to public school Pre-K following a three-year-old year at St. Columba's can help by letting the Office know your intention. We strive to set our re-enrollment deadlines in a way that allows families to hear the DCPS Pre-K lottery results before submitting their re-enrollment contract. *We regret that we cannot hold a spot for any child for the following year while families wait to move off a waitlist or for late-scheduled lotteries without the deposit.*

St. Columba's Nursery School Parents Engagement Team: Our very active Parent Engagement Team creates volunteer opportunities that assist the School staff in many ways.

Parent Education: Each year St. Columba's offers courses and other opportunities for parents to learn about child development and discipline issues that can affect family life. Newsletters, email messages, and fliers from the School will alert you to these important and helpful events.

Birthdays: Every child enjoys celebrating his or her birthday at school and we are happy to help you with your child's celebration. Please contact your child's teachers in advance to arrange for a date on which you will provide a **pre-packaged**, relatively healthy, special snack for the children. Fruit, whole-grain cookies or muffins, pudding, and juice popsicles are examples of special treats that children enjoy that are also good for them. With any snack you might provide, please be aware that children in the class may have allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, or other ingredients. Classrooms celebrate the children with summer birthdays with a group event usually scheduled in late spring just before school closes. Your teachers will let you know their plans so that you can take part in this happy day.

Child Progress Assessments: At St. Columba's we seek to ensure that children are meeting age-appropriate milestones as they progress along the developmental continuum. Our goal is to help

every child become as competent as possible in all areas of development. We track our children's progress in several formal and informal ways across the year. The year starts with teachers reviewing family background questionnaires completed by each family. At school, the teachers observe children looking for evidence that each child has reached the developmental milestones our curriculum addresses in language, cognitive, fine- and gross-motor skills; social/emotional development; behavior, and self-regulation. Teachers complete a St. Columba's Child Skills Checklist before each of our two conferences in order to prepare to inform parents of their child's progress. For each conference and at year's end, teachers complete a Child Progress Report for each child that includes their observations of the child and his/her development across the year in social/emotional, language and communication, self-help, physical, cognitive and self-expression skills.

Regular and frequent communication between and among teachers as well as teachers and parents is another important piece of our assessment practices. Staying informed about issues emerging at home and keeping the parents abreast of what we see at school helps teachers and parents know a child and to be mindful of changing circumstances that result in emotional or behavioral changes.

Inclusion of children with special needs: In keeping with our mission, the Nursery School seeks to admit a number of students with known special needs each year. Our play-based curriculum that focuses on knowing each child for his or her unique gifts and challenges makes an ideal setting for educating all children. We believe that all children benefit from learning to understand and have compassion for human differences. Although most of our teachers do not hold special education degrees, each of them has the skills and knowledge to create an accommodating and successful school experience for each child, and they are assisted in this work by the Head of School and the School's Inclusion Coordinator. If you have any questions about our inclusion policy, please contact the School Office for more information.

Shadows and one-to-one assistants: From time to time a child will have an unexpected learning, motoric, health, or behavioral challenge that requires the assistance of a shadow or one-to-one assistant in the classroom. In these instances, the Inclusion Coordinator and the Head of School will meet with the parents to discuss how this adaptation will help the child and provide an opportunity for parents to give input on the selection of an aide. The Inclusion Coordinator will also establish a reporting structure that allows the teachers, aide, and parents to communicate regularly about the teachers' goals and the child's progress.

Therapists/Practitioners: Some children at St. Columba's receive therapeutic services on-site (Speech, Occupational therapy etc.).

Discipline policy: St. Columba's Nursery School recognizes that, as they learn to navigate the world, most children exhibit inappropriate behavior and/or misbehavior at least once in a while. Our philosophy with regard to correcting these kinds of behaviors is to carefully introduce children at the beginning of the year to the "right way" to use materials and equipment, as well as how to conduct themselves with their peers, teachers, visitors, and our school pets.

We know that in many instances, misbehavior is a product of not knowing how or having sufficient words or self-control to manage strong emotions or deal with the difficult and mysterious circumstances

that are so frequently part of a young child's experience. We work to actively coach children and help them build the skills and language to manage independently, and increase their self-awareness and understanding.

We strive to anticipate misbehavior before it occurs using distraction, redirection, gentle reminders, and direct instruction. Occasionally, children may be asked to step out of an emotional situation to cool off in a quiet spot and consider alternatives, always within sight of a teacher and often sitting with her/him. When the child is ready, s/he will be asked to rejoin the group to try again. In cases when misbehavior continues, or when it presents a safety issue for that child or to someone else, a parent may be called by the Office to pick the child up from school to spend the rest of that day at home. The child will be welcome back at school the next day for a fresh start. In very rare instances, a child may be asked to leave school for a longer time or even permanently, but this would not occur without many conversations between School and home and after several strategies had been tried.

If at any point, a child's behavior warrants additional attention from the teachers, a dialogue will begin among the teachers, parents, Head of School and Assistant Head so that appropriate strategies for that child can be established. We strive always to resolve behavior issues by putting into place positive behavior support systems. WE NEVER use physical punishments, psychological abuse or coercion. WE DO NOT withhold or threaten to withhold food, outside time, or special events as a form of punishment.

Policy on parent/teacher relationships outside of school: As a rule, when the School is aware of a close relationship between a teacher and family outside of school, the School will place the family's child in different class. Likewise, as children grow to love their classroom teachers, parents often ask them to babysit, participate in birthday parties, and other activities outside of the school day that may create close friendships. Teachers, of course, are usually pleased and flattered to be considered for these invitations and know they are a sign of both confidence and affection from the family. However, it is a School policy that teachers not babysit for families whose children are in their current classroom, or engage in social activities outside of school that may affect the professional nature of the relationship between teacher and parents.

Resolution of parent/school conflicts: A parent with a concern should first bring that concern to the child's teachers. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, an informal discussion with the Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School shall take place in an effort to resolve the concern. These conversations may include the teachers or others the family may choose. Failing to reach a satisfactory resolution through these steps, the parent may then file a formal grievance with the School's Board of Governors.

Policy against harassment: It is our policy to maintain a working environment for our employees and a learning environment for our students that is free from harassment of any kind including sexual harassment. In the event that harassment, sexual or otherwise, is reported, the Head of School and the Board of Governors will conduct a thorough investigation, and will take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. Staff receive trainings in recognizing abuse and neglect and are mandated reporters. The School abides by all laws and regulations in the District of Columbia regarding reporting suspected cases of child abuse or sexual misconduct.

Statement of non-discrimination: In accordance with applicable laws and in the interest of being a just, equitable, and inclusive community, St. Columba's Nursery School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, family status or composition, economic status, age, or physical disability in the administration of its admission policies, financial aid program, educational program, hiring and terms of employment of faculty and staff. As a part of St. Columba's parish, the School does give special consideration in the admission process to active and officially enrolled members of the parish as well as to children with special needs. We also give priority to children whose families live and/or work within .25 mile of the School as part of our neighborhood agreement.