

St. James Early Learning Center 2019-2020 Parent Handbook



The stronger the start, the better the finish.

This Parent Handbook provides the mission and purpose of the ELC and includes detailed policies and procedures that we rely on for the good of the children we serve and the center's continued success.

Mission Statement

St. James ELC is a not-for-profit childcare center dedicated to the education and care of young children, located at St. James Catholic Church in Savannah, GA. Our mission is to provide a high quality, developmentally appropriate, play-based program that allows children to engage in meaningful interactions with their peers and caregivers, while providing parents flexible and affordable options for childcare, within our community.

Philosophy

Our core belief lies in the fact that children are natural learners, curious seekers of knowledge, and explorers in every sense of the word. They have a voice and an important point of view, which is listened to and respected in the classroom. Children are encouraged to develop positive relationships while engaging in meaningful interactions with their caregivers and peers on a daily basis. We believe that young children learn best when they are given the opportunity to learn in a language rich classroom that offers a variety of learning opportunities through play and hands-on activities.

Hours of Operation

The ELC is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, August 5, 2019 through June 30, 2020. We may run a summer session in July 2020, so please indicate your interest to attend on your registration form. We also close for Diocesan holidays. All dates are located in the Updated 2019-20 School Calendar, which can be found online at www.stjameselc.com.

Contact Us

St. James Catholic Church
8412 Whitfield Avenue Savannah, GA 31406 Church Phone: 912-355-1523 Fax: 912-353-7226
Fr. Daniel Firmin, Pastor

St. James Early Learning Center
8412 Whitfield Avenue Savannah, GA 31406 ELC Phone: 912-629-2430
Wendy L. Harrison, Director

ELC Website: www.stjameselc.com
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Enrollment

Children must turn one, two or three years of age on or before September 1 of the year they plan to attend. SJELC complies with the State of Georgia's *Bright from the Start* licensing Rules & Regulations. Our staff-to-child ratios at the ELC exceed the state mandates to provide high quality care. Class sizes are targeted at 10 full time enrollees for 1's, 14 for 2's, and 16 for 3's.

St. James ELC Staff-to-Child Ratios	State of Georgia's Staff-to-Child Ratios	Total Class Size
1's - 1 to 5	1's - 1 to 8	10 students daily
2's - 1 to 7	2's - 1 to 10	14 students daily
3's - 1 to 8	3's - 1 to 15	16 students daily

Registration

The 2019-20 Registration Packet is available online at <http://www.stjameselc.com>. Click on the tab **REGISTER YOUR CHILD** to get to the 2019-20 Registration Packet with all necessary forms and information. You will need to make a copy of the following forms to hand in for registration.

- 2019-20 Student Application
- 2019-20 Parental Agreement for Care Form
- 2019-20 Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form
- 2019-20 Emergency Release Form
- 2019-20 External Preparations Release Form
- Current Immunization Record* (Form 3132) ***No exemptions permitted**

The registration fee is \$150. and must be handed in with your paperwork in order to secure your space. The \$200. Annual Supply Fee is due along with the first tuition payment on August 5, 2019, which is the first day of school. Registration week opens, with priority given where applicable, the first full week of February. Any remaining spaces available will be given out on a first-come, first-serve basis, and in accordance with priority enrollment, when possible.

Tuition & Payments

Tuition is set for the year, which includes 11 months of school, from August through June. July the center closes for maintenance and staff rest. The annual cost for childcare can be paid in one payment, two payments or eleven payments. Parents are responsible for paying all eleven months, whether your child attends or not. Payments are due on the first of each month and preferred payment would be in the form of an Auto Draft from your bank. You will set up a payment to be mailed to St. James ELC at 8412 Whitefield Avenue, Savannah GA 31406. Please make arrangements with your bank now so the first payment is sent on time. Also, the supply fee is due in the first payment, which is \$200. per year.

Wait List and Priority for Enrollment

If space is not available in your group, your child may be placed on a wait list. Children are given priority for enrollment in the order listed below, and then on a first-come basis, first-serve basis according to the following priorities:

1. Current SJELC Families & Siblings (Must meet Sept. 1, 2019 cutoff date to enter)
2. St. James Participating Parish Families
3. St. James School Families
4. SJELC or SJS Alumni
5. Full Time Students

School Tour for Prospective Students

We encourage parents of prospective students to visit our facility and talk to teachers and current parents, as well as observe typical play and learning sessions to appreciate the quality and care that we take with each of our children during the day. Please call ahead if you would like an appointment to visit. 912-355-1523

Applying and Reserving a Space

Before arranging a tour, speak with the Director to make sure the ELC has an opening in the age group you need. After you have reviewed the facility and had all of your questions answered, you may reserve your child's spot by filling out a registration packet located on our website and leaving a registration payment of \$150.

Policy & Procedures - Staffing and Curriculum

The Staff

All licensed childcare providers in the State of Georgia must undergo local and national background checks and fingerprinting. All employees must adhere to the ELC Staff Policy Handbook, which is covered in an orientation for new employees. ELC Directors in licensed facilities must obtain the 40-hour Director's Credential, fingerprinting, local and national background check, plus ongoing training in the field. The Director and all staff

members, including substitute caregivers, must complete a minimum of 10 hours of training per calendar year and maintain updated Pediatric First Aid & CPR Certification.

VIRTUS Training

The Catholic Diocese of Savannah further requires that every person working or volunteering with children must have VIRTUS (Latin for valor, moral strength, excellence) training. This includes best practices to prevent wrongdoing and promote “right doing” in religious organizations, plus background checks. VIRTUS programs empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church. All who help in the operation of the ELC (directors, teachers, aides, volunteers) submit to a national background check and take a three hour VIRTUS training course. Before anyone works in the ELC all background checks must be completed.

The Curriculum

We use a combination of The Creative Curriculum and curricula guided by *the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards* with the children in our center. The activities are hands-on, sensorial, and fun for little explorers. Developmentally appropriate practice is focused on as the children grow and develop. Ideas and activities are pulled from many different early childhood books, magazines, and websites.

- Monthly Lesson Plans & Activity Calendars: The teachers will post monthly lesson plans/activity calendars that will highlight a special activity the children will be doing each day.
- An email is sent home daily with photos and an overview of the daily activities in the classrooms.

The Daily Schedule

Publishing a daily schedule informs the parents and gives the children a sense of familiarity as they move from one activity to the next throughout the day. We recognize that the daily schedule is a guide and does allow for flexibility. Schedule changes may occur due to weather or other situations that arise when caring for young children. Daily schedules are posted in the classrooms.

Arrival & Pick Up

Please enter through the classroom doors at the end of the parking lot side of the building. . The classroom doors will be locked throughout the day, so if you cannot gain access, knock or call the classroom and someone will open the door for you. Please advise the staff if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child. A photo ID and car seat are required for all pickups.

- **Arrival:** All children participating in childcare must arrive no later than 9:30am each day. Anyone arriving after 9:30am will not be able to participate in care that day. If there is an emergency, it needs to be called into the Director, Asst. Director, or Classroom Teacher ahead of time.
- **Pickups:** Late Pickups are charged after 3:30 pm, 6pm and all early dismissal pickups. You will be charged \$15. for any part of each quarter hour you pick up late. Please be mindful of our closing times, on regular days and early dismissal days! Also, you must sign in and out every single day. The staff will do it only if you do not sign, but our licensing agreement states parents must sign in and out for their own child each day of childcare. Also, our staff will note all late pickups and will correct the pickup time if it is written incorrectly. Late fees will apply. The ELC staff is to report all late arrivals and pickups to the office.
- **Parents:** Although we have an open door policy and welcome parents into the center, we ask that you allow your children the time and space to acclimate to their classroom setting and let the teachers handle them throughout the day. They will notify you if they need you for anything. This helps relieve stress and disruptions in the classroom when parents are mindful of keeping visits limited. You are welcome to call and check on your child at anytime during the day. We ask that you do not talk on your cell phones while inside the center and classrooms.

Communication

Communication between the Director, Teachers, and Families is primarily done by email and through our website. We always make time to speak to parents by phone and in person, as long as it does not disrupt the teacher’s focus on the children and/or the children’s routine. Communication at drop off and pick up should be quick and concise, as to allow the teachers to properly care for and supervise the children without distraction.

Policy & Procedures – General Routine

Meals

- Breakfast is not part of the ELC program. Breakfast is to be served at home.
- Morning Snack is served between 9:00 and 9:30am each day. The ELC provides a good snack with either milk or juice everyday. If the snacks do not meet with your liking on a specific day, please bring a snack from home that meets our food guidelines.
- **Lunch, including a drink, is packed at home by the parents. Lunch is served between 11:00 and 12:00 noon.** All rules are to be followed regarding choking hazards and nut-free foods/drinks. Include a veggie, a fruit, a starch, a protein, and a dairy. Leftovers are great as long as they apply to the rules. We can warm them up, if needed. Please pack a bib (Rm. 1 & 2), a tea towel, and a sippy cup with water only, in all lunch boxes. We will microwave anything that takes under 2 minutes to heat up. No soda or fast food permitted at lunch. Any food that is opened but not eaten will be disposed of at the ELC. (See Rules for Meals below) All foods from home must be diced to avoid choking hazards.
- Afternoon Snack is a light snack and drink served after naptime and before day school dismissal. It is served between 2:00 and 2:30pm.

Rules for Meals

SJELC is a Nut-Free Center. Also, there are NO HOTDOGS, FISH, GRAPES, or POPCORN permitted in the center. Parents are responsible for dicing up all foods that come into the center. ELC Staff will remove all items not diced up or items not permitted in the center. A snack calendar will be posted in the classrooms and be available on our website at the beginning of each month. The ELC provides both a morning and an afternoon snack for each child. This includes whole milk, fruit juices, water and a variety of snacks (e.g. Cheerios, diced fruit, yogurt, muffins). If your child requires a special diet, you will need to supply snacks/drinks. If your child has a food allergy, you will fill out the Food Allergy Action Plan form in your child's registration packet. We are a Nut-Free school. Make sure you check labels at home when preparing food to be brought into the center. No fast food may be brought in nor dropped off for lunch. Sodas, sweet tea, sugary drinks, diet drinks, and/or candy are not permitted at school. Please send in milk, water, or an all-fruit based juice. Children may not attend school if a lunch is not provided on any specific day. *Parents may drop off a forgotten lunch in the ELC office no later than 10:30 am in the Director's office only!*

Potty Training

- Room 1: One year olds will use diapers, supplied by the parents. We do not use powder or Vaseline on the children at diaper changing time, so please do not send it to school. Parents are to provide all diaper supplies. The teachers will notify you when supplies are needed. If any of the older ones, turning two, show an interest in potty training, one of the teachers will assist them in Room 2.
- Room 2: Toddlers/Twos may potty train throughout the year as they begin to show interest. There is a diaper changing station in the two-year old room, as well as a small toilet and sink for the children to use, as needed. Staff will provide assistance to two-year old children at bathroom times. Although potty training is ultimately up to the parents, this is the classroom where they focus on independent potty skills in preparation for moving to Room 3.
- Room 3: All three-year old children must be fully potty trained to enroll in this class. The child must be willing and able to tell the teacher that they have to go to the bathroom, and they must be able to use the bathroom with minimal assistance. In order to best succeed in potty training, parents should chose loose-fitting clothes that are easy to pull on and off. Avoid buttons, snaps, belts, etc... Pull-ups and diapers are no longer permitted as they move into this class. The room is equipped with two separate bathrooms and children are encouraged to use the bathroom freely during the school day. The teachers schedule several bathroom breaks throughout the day in case a child is shy about asking to go potty. The staff will provide assistance if the child asks for it or if it becomes obvious that help is required. All potty related achievements and/or difficulties will be communicated to the parents by the lead teacher. If, for some reason, a child begins school in Room 3 and is not potty trained, parents will be notified. We will set a two-week time period in which parents work diligently along with the classroom teachers to potty train. If after two weeks, the child is still not independent, he/she will go on Delayed Start. Please see details below regarding this program.

Delayed Start Program

- **Walking-** If your one year old is not walking by August 5, 2019, they will be in the delayed start program for Room 1. There is a \$150. monthly fee to hold the space for non-walkers in the one year old program. We encourage you and your child to visit the classroom during the Delayed Start Program, to get to know the children and teachers. This must be arranged in advance and parents may never leave the child in the classroom. Parents must be present for the entirety of each visit while in the delayed start program.
- **Potty Training-** If your three year old is not fully potty trained by August 5, 2019, they will be in the Delayed Start Program for Room 3. The Delayed Start Program for Room 3 is as follows:
 - **August 2019:** The parents and the teachers will work diligently together to get the child potty trained the first two weeks in class. By August 16, 2019 if the child is still not trained, the delayed start will begin and the child will not be out of school until independent toilet habits are accomplished at home. August tuition will be half price and the child's space will be held. If you decide not to return to St. James ELC, you must advise the Director by email by the end of August 2019.
 - **September 2019:** Tuition will be charged at half price while continuing on the Delayed Start Program. Again, if the child is not trained by the end of September 2019, and you no longer care to stay in the program at St. James ELC, you must notify the Director by email by the end of September 2019.

Activities & Clothing

Children are encouraged to participate in all of the planned activities at the ELC, including supervised water play (e.g. water hose, water table, splash pools). Children also use paint and play dough and play in In order to best succeed in potty training, parents should chose loose-fitting clothes that are easy to pull on and off. Avoid buttons, snaps, belts, etc... sand and dirt. Dress your child in play clothes, as all sorts of messy things can likely appear on their clothing. Please keep an extra set of weather-appropriate clothes, including shoes and socks, at the ELC. During cold months, use layers of clothing to provide maximum comfort for inside and outside play. Make sure your child wears comfortable, well-fitted tennis shoes and crew socks each day. *Avoid loose sandals or flip-flops because they will not provide the foot protection and traction for inside and outside activities.* We are not able to honor requests to keep children indoors when the other children are going out to play. We do adhere to licensing rules for hot and cold weather days and use the indoor gymnasium whenever possible.

Birthday Parties

If you would like to bring nut-free cupcakes or muffins and juice for the class, please make arrangements with the child's teacher, in advance. Party hats, party bags, piñatas, and/or balloons are not permitted. We are happy to hand out party invitations as long as all the classmates are invited. Please mind the Nut-Free policy whenever food is brought into the ELC.

Holiday Celebrations

We celebrate the following holidays, in an age appropriate manner, at the ELC. This means snacks will be holiday themed and a special activity will take place in the mornings between 9:00-10:00am.

- Halloween: Costumes may **not** be worn, but Halloween play clothes are perfect! Save costumes for trick-or-treating at home!
- Thanksgiving
- St. Nicholas Day
- Christmas Party
- Valentine's Day
- St. Patrick's Day
- Easter

Staff Babysitting

We realize that parents may look to an individual staff member to provide private babysitting services for their child(ren). Please be advised that the St. James Church and the St. James ELC will assume no responsibility for employees who are asked to privately provide services for families. All arrangements for these services must be done after work hours and off school grounds. Children are not permitted to go home with staff members unless

the parent specifically lists that person on their authorized pick-up list in the office and provides it in writing to the Director.

Car Seats

Under State Law, all children in the age range that we serve at the ELC must be transported to and from school in a child restraint seat. Please transport your child safely and in accordance with the law each day. Failure to abide by this law may result in DFACS report.

Policy & Procedures - Illness

Emergency Information

Parents are responsible to inform SJELC of any changes in primary address, phone number, work schedules, authorized release persons, emergency contacts, health/allergy issues and all pertinent information. SJELC/SJC will not be held responsible for anything that may happen as a result of false, incorrect or incomplete information provided by a parent or guardian on the Emergency Form or any other documentation given to SJELC.

Sick Children

Children will be exposed to germs and things that can make them ill. We cannot prevent illness, but measures are taken to reduce the spread of disease whenever possible. This includes requesting that children showing symptoms of illness and/or infection remain at home until they are well. We are not licensed to provide care for sick children. Therefore, we need to work together to protect the health of our children, our teachers, and our families. Bright from the Start does not allow a child with a fever, diarrhea, rash, vomiting, contagious illness or any other symptom of illness to participate in child care. Children who are restricted from participation in care due to illness or contagious disease may not return to care for 24 hours. All contagious illnesses must be reported to the classroom teachers, and allowed to run their course at home. A pediatrician's note is required upon return to school.

Symptoms of Illness

If the classroom teacher notices any signs and/or symptoms of illness/infection upon arrival, the child will not be permitted to stay in childcare that day. A fever is one indicator that the body is fighting an illness and should be taken as a sign that a child is ill. If a child is ill, has diarrhea, a rash, and/or infection, the parent will be called to pick up the child right away.

Medication

Medication is no longer given at St. James ELC. The only medication we dispense is first aid meds, such as antibiotic or anti-itch creams. ALL medication is to be given at home by a family member. The only exception when meds may be given during childcare hours, is when there are **NO** other options given by the pediatrician. In these rare cases, all medications are to be signed in at the Director's office. A note from the physician with the child's name, exact dosage, times, and dates must accompany the medicine, which must be in it's original packaging. Parents must give the first dose of any medicine at home to watch for a reaction. If the child can tolerate the meds without any adverse reactions and/or side effects, then the meds may be administered at school, providing there is NO other alternative. The ELC Director will be in charge of administering the medications according to the State of Georgia licensing laws. **Staff members are no longer permitted to administer medications brought from home**, other than an Epi-Pen in case of emergency and/or the ones listed on the DECAL Form, Authorization to Dispense External Preparations. A staff member will witness and sign off on the administration of any meds in childcare.

Contagious Disease

SJELC may unknowingly admit a child to class during the period of contagiousness. Parents will be notified of incidents of contagious diseases so they may take appropriate action to protect their children or watch for signs of the disease. We request that parents help prevent the spread of disease by carefully observing their own children for symptoms of illness. Please make sure your child is well enough to participate in ELC activities each day. In most cases, after a contagious illness, a child that is treated and is symptom free for 24 hours may return to class. However, if a child does not feel well enough to participate in the daily routine, please allow them sufficient time to recover fully at home. Head lice, impetigo, conjunctivitis and ringworm are common childhood problems that are

contagious! Outbreaks of contagious diseases are reported to the County Health Dept. as required by Bright from the Start. **Children may not participate in childcare if they have fever (100.7F), diarrhea, vomiting, infection, and/or rash. Have a backup plan in place in case your child cannot participate in care. We do not care for sick children in the center. Parents are always called to pick up and must do so with reasonable urgency.**

Long-Term Illness

If a child is out due to long-term illness or injury, a proportional amount of tuition may be waived, as long as a doctor's note is provided. For longer absences, arrangements need to be discussed so as to preserve a space in the program, so we do not have to seek a replacement from the wait list. In case of withdrawal, any subsequent re-enrollment may require a modest re-entry fee assuming space is available in the ELC.

Policy & Procedures - Emergency Situations

Transporting a Child to the Hospital

If a child must be transported, the child will be taken by emergency vehicle to Memorial Hospital or an appropriate medical facility as deemed necessary by 911 emergency medical technicians. A staff member, familiar to the child, will remain with the child until a parent or authorized person takes custody of the child at the medical facility.

Emergency Medical Care

Staff members will document any illness, accident and/or injury that occur at school. If the staff believes that a child needs emergency medical care beyond basic first aid or needs a medical evaluation, appropriate steps will be taken to secure such care for the child. These steps include, but are not limited to, contacting a parent or guardian; emergency contact persons listed by the parent on the registration form; the child's physician; 911

Bad Weather Closings

The ELC follows Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools and St. James School procedures for all weather-related closings. If a storm watch is issued for our area, then parents must make plans for their children in case the center has to close. If a storm warning is issued, the center will close & parents will be required to pick up their children within a two hour window following the warning announcements. Local TV and radio stations will provide announcements concerning cancellations, closings and delays. When in doubt, please check all available news outlets. The center will close if there is a prolonged power, water or AC outage and parents will be called and asked to come and pick up their children. School will resume when it has been deemed safe to return. All communications between home and school are primarily done by email. If we cannot reach you by email, we will call the numbers on your registration form. There are no tuition refunds for emergency closings. All information is also listed on our website at <http://www.stjameselc.com/about-us/weatheremergency-closings/>

Fires and Other Disasters

In the event of a fire at the ELC, the children and staff will be evacuated to the St. James School. Other locations could be assigned and will be determined upon safety and health issues. In the event of another natural disaster such as tornado, tropical storm, hurricane, or severe thunderstorm, the children will be moved to the safest location in the church building. The closest safe spot in our building is at the end of the girls and boys bathrooms in the ELC main hallway. In all emergency situations, parents will be notified to the best of the ELC's ability. In case phone service is lost, the staff will contact parents using cell phones. The children will be kept in the care of the ELC staff and as comfortable as possible until picked up by a parent or family member.

Police Lockdown

If the local police deem it necessary to secure the safety and well being of the children in our care, they may place the ELC on lockdown. If this occurs, no one is permitted to enter or leave the premises until the police lift the lockdown. If this happens during regular ELC hours, a note will be sent home with the child. If this interrupts pick-up times or the lockdown remains in effect beyond the ELC hours, then parents will be called with further instructions on pick up times and will receive updates on their child(ren).

Insurance

The ELC carries liability insurance. Paperwork will be prepared in the event of accident or injury that requires

medical attention. Families should also carry their own health insurance to be assured of adequate coverage.

Policy & Procedures - Behavior

We believe that when children have their basic needs met and have time for indoor and outdoor play each day, they usually require very little behavior management. When children are actively engaged in a variety of age-appropriate activities throughout the day, they are better able to manage their feelings and behavior. At school, we have been very successful with the use of redirecting as our main behavior management technique. This quickly takes the focus off of any unwanted behavior and refocuses the child's attention in a more positive direction. Caregivers promptly attend to all matters of conflict by being consistent, peaceful and concise. Children learn to model good behavior and kindness by watching adults. Toddlers sometimes display wide ranges of emotions, both happy and sad. Yet they often lack the language necessary to control a situation so they may resort to biting, scratching, or hitting as an alternate way to communicate with and control others in the environment. Parents and caregivers must work together to prevent children from using this behavior. If children are permitted such behavior at home, there will be little chance of eliminating it in the ELC. Every effort will be made to redirect children before using time-out.

Outside Services

If a child requires speech, occupational, and/or other services, the parent may set this up with Babies Can't Wait for children under 3 and Preschool Intervention Services for children over 3. The therapists who work for the State are background checked and all do a wonderful job with our children. We participate in these services as long as they do not interfere with the schedule or the care we provide to the class as a whole. All services are permitted to take place between the hours of 8am and 11am, Monday through Friday at the ELC.

Termination of Enrollment

If a child's behavior becomes a serious disruption or threat to the other children and/or adults, then arrangements will be made to remove the child from care. No child enrolled in the ELC will be permitted to behave in a manner that may hurt him/herself, another child, an adult, nor damage property. This also applies to incidences of parental misconduct. The learning environment is to be a positive, safe, and nurturing place for all children, where one will not be permitted to jeopardize the environment for the whole.

Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

No staff member, volunteer or anyone connected with the ELC may subject a child to verbal, physical or mental abuse, neglect or injurious treatment. The ELC Director or designated person-in-charge shall report or cause to be reported the following: *Suspicion or Evidence of Child Abuse, Neglect or Deprivation*. Following state law, suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect or deprivation shall be reported to the local County Department of Children & Family Services. We notify Bright from the Start and the Diocese of Savannah in order to comply with licensing regulations. Notification may be made to State agencies/Diocese without prior parental notification.

Mandated Reporters

A *mandated reporter* is a person who, by virtue of his or her job, is legally required to report to authorities, any suspected or confirmed abuse of children. Typically, mandated reporter professions include social workers, doctors, classroom teachers, childcare workers and other educators. Reports should be filed with the proper state offices, such as the Child Protective Services department or similar. *All St. James Early Learning Center employees are Mandated Reporters*. The Mandated Reporter Hotline number in Chatham County is 912-644-7925. Notification may be made to State agencies/Diocese without prior parental notification.

St. James Early Learning Center is a Drug-Free, Smoke-Free and Nut-Free Environment.

