



FAMILY HANDBOOK  
Policies and Procedures  
2026-2027

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Five Mile River Nursery School provides a warm, nurturing, and engaging atmosphere allowing children to be creative and adventurous learners. Our school focuses on the development of the whole child: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. Our goal is to inspire self-confidence, a love of learning, and meaningful engagement with the world.

## VISION STATEMENT:

We believe that our work affects the future of society by developing creative thinkers who are confident, competent, and collaborative; lifetime learners who will value the natural world, all peoples, and cultures. They will use knowledge constructed through discovery to make intellectual sense of the world, and will embrace an individual, as well as a collective, sense of purpose.

### FIVE MILE RIVER NURSERY SCHOOL

Accredited by NAEYC's  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
Program Number 478417  
5 Pennoyer Street, Rowayton, CT 06853  
TEL: (203-838-4266) FAX: (203-854-6627)  
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Website: [www.fmrns.com](http://www.fmrns.com)

# WELCOME

Welcome to the Five Mile River Nursery School!

Our Family Handbook and Welcome Packet provide information about our programs and policies in two ways:

Part 1: It covers all our program policies and the program curriculum.

Part 2: Provides a complete packet of the state-required forms that must be updated yearly and kept on file at the school. **These forms must be completed, signed, and returned by August 15<sup>th</sup> for school year programs and before summer camp. Children will not be able to attend school or camp without these forms.**

The handbook should be used as a source book to get to know the policies of the Five Mile River Nursery School. It is important that you familiarize yourself with all the information contained in the handbook. FMRNS will make every effort to provide this information to each family in a language they understand, if needed. Our goal is to provide a network of support for each family we serve, and form a strong bond in partnership with you, to make your experience of preschool as rewarding as it is for your child.

**Nursery School Council:** The Council is the governing body of the school and is comprised of the Directors, parents, church representatives. The Council meets every two months to discuss school matters, fundraising ideas, family events. Being on the council is a great way to get to know other parents. Meetings are open to all interested parties. If you would like to be on our school council, please contact us at [Director@fmrns.com](mailto:Director@fmrns.com).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Director at (203) 838-4266. We look forward to getting to know you and your children.

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## FIVE MILE RIVER NURSERY SCHOOL

Please read our family handbook and complete and return the following included forms to the school by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, children may not attend school until all forms are completed and on file at the school.

1. Family Enrollment Contract
2. Health Form
3. Emergency Form
4. Permission Form for Alternate Pick-Up
5. Permission Forms to administer non-prescription topical medications
6. Medical Care Plan

### All About Us

The Five Mile River Nursery School (FMRNS) was founded in 1987 to provide this community with a resource for the care and nurture of its preschool children. The

school is a non-denominational, non-profit weekday program operated by the Rowayton United Methodist Church (RUMC). Our goal is to provide each family with a network of individualized support and form a strong bond in partnership with you to make families' experience of preschool as rewarding as it is for children. We will make every attempt to communicate with each family in a language they understand.

### NAEYC Accreditation+

Five Mile River Nursery School was privileged to be the first program in the state of Connecticut, and one of the first seventeen in the nation to be reaccredited under the new NAEYC standards. The new standards require programs to meet 80% of over 400 strict criteria in Ten Standards to be awarded Accreditation. Five Mile River Nursery met the criteria by an average score of 98% which awarded us the highest tier of Accreditation. Accreditation+ is valid for five years. Programs committed to Accreditation+ are committed to meeting the highest standards for quality in education for young children, birth through age eight.

### Our Purpose

An early education at FMRNS develops young children's minds, bodies, and emotions, and assists in the development of individuals who are self-directed, lifelong learners by:

- Generating a relaxed atmosphere of openness, spontaneity, creativity, joy, love and respect for children and families of all backgrounds.
- Providing an array of stimulating activities to promote and enhance aesthetic and cultural awareness, language development, academic readiness, motor development, social-emotional skills and an appreciation of the natural world.
- Encouraging independence, feelings of self-confidence, respect for self and others along with a sense of belonging and sharing in a group.
- Offering loving support to each child and family through a positive, reciprocal relationship based on trust.

### Our Philosophy

We believe that early childhood experiences provide the foundation for one's lifetime. The FMRNS program provides individualized experiences based on authentic assessment to promote the optimal social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language and spiritual development of each child.

Our school offers a friendly, social atmosphere where a child's feeling of self-respect and self-confidence is developed, as well as appreciation and consideration for others. With a strong belief in the value that play is the work of the preschooler, FMRNS provides an environment where children focus on fun while benefitting from the "hidden" advantages of play-based learning. We seek to provide families with a caring learning environment in a safe and healthy setting while focusing on the education of the whole child: emotional and physical health, social relationships, creativity and academic growth

## Code of Conduct

A thriving preschool community depends on everyone working together for the benefit of children, families, staff, and the school. Respectful, kind, and compassionate communication is essential. If a parent, guardian, or other family member's behavior, communication, or interaction—on or off school property—is disruptive, intimidating, overly aggressive, reflects a loss of confidence in or disagreement with the preschool's policies, instructional methods, or discipline practices, or otherwise interferes with safety procedures, staff responsibilities, or the school's educational purpose and program, the school reserves the right to dismiss the family or family member from the program.

## Agreement with Families

Families are asked to sign an enrollment contract included with their acceptance letter. By signing this contract, you acknowledge you have read the information contained in the handbook located on our website, agree to become familiar with these policies and to abide by them. You may request the Nursery School Council at any time for a review of these policies, which are updated yearly. The contract is an agreement between the family and the school to abide by all the tuition and policy requirements of the school, including the returning and maintaining yearly, up-to-date health and permission forms as required by the State of Connecticut.

## Our Curriculum

Our daily programs are orderly yet flexible and responsive to the needs of individual children and the group. The curriculum offers a variety of experiences, levels of challenge, and opportunities for children to progress at their own pace. Each day includes a balance of indoor and outdoor play, quiet and active experiences, individual and group activities, large- and fine-motor development, and child-initiated and staff-initiated learning.

Each year of the program is intentionally connected to provide continuity throughout your child's preschool experience. The four-year-old class builds on the experiences of the three-year-old class, just as the threes build on the twos. As children progress, teachers place increasing emphasis on listening skills and following directions. Through puzzles, art, dramatic play, and sensorimotor experiences, children are introduced to pre-reading, pre-writing, and math concepts according to their individual readiness. Outdoor experiences are an important part of daily plans and support large-motor development.

Indoor and outdoor classroom spaces are organized into activity zones and learning centers that support preschoolers and toddlers through the following experiences:

**Art:** Children explore materials such as markers, crayons, finger paint, easel paint, collage items, and natural elements used in ephemeral process art. These experiences encourage manipulation, experimentation, exploration, creativity, and expression of ideas and emotions.

**Blocks:** Building with blocks of different types and sizes, accessories such as ramps and balls, and natural materials such as tree “cookies” and stumps supports dramatic play, social interaction, cooperation, problem solving, and exploration of perceptual, spatial, and STEM concepts.

**Concept Development:** Young children actively build understanding of the world around them. Through themes in learning centers and activity zones, teachers offer experiences that expand children’s knowledge, cognitive skills, language, curiosity, and problem-solving abilities. These experiences also help children develop awareness and respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, and experiences within the school community, the larger Rowayton community, and society.

**Dramatic Play:** Role-playing and pretend play help children reenact and make sense of real-world experiences. With props, children can explore many roles, such as caring for a baby, acting as a doctor, becoming an entomologist, cooking as a chef, or learning about diverse family traditions and activities.

**Language Arts/Emergent Literacy:** Books, flannel boards, discussions, puppets, storytelling, and related activities support language development, help children learn about the world, and encourage an early appreciation of literature. Teachers talk with children during play, routines, and mealtimes to build language skills and honor the languages spoken in children’s homes. Early literacy is supported throughout the day through small- and large-group stories, classroom libraries, print-rich environments, writing materials, and writing centers where preschoolers explore pre-writing concepts and skills.

**Large and Small Motor Activities:** Climbing, running, pushing, and pulling are supported through wheel toys, wheelbarrows, loose parts, climbing areas, and other gross-motor activities. Cutting, pasting, art, woodworking, puzzles, manipulatives, and natural materials help children practice and develop fine-motor skills.

**Nature-Inspired Curriculum and Materials:** Children in all age groups develop a deeper connection to nature and environmental awareness through natural materials in indoor learning centers, rich outdoor classrooms and gardens, nature walks, and curriculum themes that invite children to learn in and about nature.

**Music:** Singing, listening, experimenting with instruments, and exploring different types of music introduce children to musical concepts, rhythm, movement, song, and dance.

**Self-Help Skills:** Daily routines and activities are tailored to each group and child’s developmental abilities. Tasks such as cleaning up, washing hands, and serving themselves snack encourage independence, build confidence, and promote an “I can” attitude.

**Sensory Play:** Sand, water, playdough, fabrics, and other sensory materials, including natural elements, invite children to explore textures, object qualities, change, and concepts such as empty/full and more/less, while also providing opportunities for sensory exploration and relaxation.

**Science & Math:** Hands-on experiences such as cooking, sensory play, manipulatives, games, planting seeds, gardening, counting objects, number songs, stories, nature activities, and STEM explorations support scientific discovery and early understanding of number and quantity. Some classrooms may have a small pet, such as a gerbil, hamster, fish, or hermit crab, for children to observe and help care for.

As children engage freely in intentionally planned learning centers with naturally occurring activities, they experience many opportunities for cognitive, language, physical, spiritual, and social-emotional development at their own level and pace, while also interacting with peers and staff.

To nurture children’s natural curiosity, teachers rotate materials and offer progressively challenging activities. Through independent and group experiences, children build confidence, self-esteem, respect, independence, curiosity, critical thinking, and appreciation for others.

## **Our Daily Programs**

**Two’s Classes 9:30-12:00**

2-days Tues/Thurs

3-days Mon/Weds/Fri

**Three’s Classes 9:30-12:00**

3-days Mon/Tues/Weds **or** Weds/Thurs/Fri

4-days Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri

**Four’s Class 9:00-12:00**

5-days Mon-Fri

**Fives Class 9:00-1:30 (includes lunch)**

5-days Mon-Fri

## Extended Day Offerings

### Studio **Mon-Fri**

#### **8:30**

Opportunities for independent exploration based on the emergent interests of the children will be offered each morning. Children will be escorted to their regular preschool program when it begins.

2's class 8:30-9:30 \$20/day

3's class 8:30-9:30 \$20/day

4's class 8:30-9:00 \$10/day

5's class 8:30-9:00 \$10/day

### Lunch Bunch

#### **Mon-Fri 12:00-1:30pm (\$30/day)**

(Lunch Bunch on Fridays is limited to 20 children and not available for the 2's class) 2's and 5's remain in their classrooms for lunch.

Children wash their hands before we all sit down to eat lunch together. Children are allowed to choose from whatever has been prepared for them, in any order. We encourage you to pack healthy choices. After each child has finished eating, they clean up their places and use the bathroom. They are free to play until all children are finished eating and then we will go outside for outdoor play before dismissal.

PLEASE NOTE: For the safety of children with allergies, **we maintain a nut free environment.** DO NOT include any food product containing nuts, nut products, or foods processed with nuts, in your child's lunch. State regulations require all lunches to contain an ice pack.

### Enrichment

#### **Mon-Fri 1:30-2:30 (\$20 per day)**

**Monday: Movin' and Groovin'** We will explore movement with music, making our own music, and playing musical games.

**Tuesdays: Ooey Gooley Art** We will explore open ended processes in art and learn about line, shape, and color.

**Wednesdays: Science and Math** We will discover our world using scientific inquiry and firming up foundational math skills such as sorting, grouping, patterning, and counting. We will incorporate the disciplines of **STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) into our experiences.

**Thursdays: Drama Day** We will explore storytelling by dictating and illustrating our own stories, as well as reading and acting out our favorite and culturally important

children's literature. We will use puppets, felt boards, and art to learn all about books and authors.

Fridays: Yoga Children will explore yoga and mindfulness. Fridays extended day activities will be supervised by our regular substitutes while the teachers have their staff meeting in the FMRNS Library.

## Siesta

### **Mon-Fri 2:30–3:30 (\$20 per day)**

After our Enrichment portion of the day, we get cozy on our cots with our blankets. We will listen to music or a story and have a chance to talk quietly with our friends. Look at books or do puzzles (Please note: a minimum of 3 children is required to sign up to offer the 2:30-3:30 PM Siesta.)

## Late Enrichment

### **Mon-Thurs 3:30-4:00 (\$10 per day) Not available on Fridays**

The last half hour of the day is a nice quiet time for drawing, playing games, doing puzzles, reading stories, or playing on the playground.

\*All extended day programs are a la carte. Sign up as a regular or as needed for the day. Please BrightWheel the office by 10am to check availability and sign up. \* Non-FMRNS children 3 yrs. and up are invited to sign up for our lunch bunch and extended day programs by filling out a registration form on our website and paying a \$38 dollar registration fee.

## Summer Camp

### **June through July Mon-Fri 9:00-1:00 (\$85 per day)**

Our Summer Program runs for eight or nine weeks each summer throughout June and July. Registration for summer camp begins in February with current students getting priority for 2 weeks. After two weeks, camp enrollment forms will be available on our website for outside children to apply.

Children may sign up by the week for 2 days (Tues/Thurs), 3 days (Mon/Weds/Fri) or all 5 days (Mon-Fri). Camp tuition must be paid in full by April 15<sup>th</sup>. We cannot refund or give credits for missed camp days. If your child misses a camp day, you may sign up for another camp day where available.

Children bring their lunch, bathing suits and towels. Families are requested to apply sunscreen and insect repellent to their children before arrival. Five Mile River Nursery School must have specific, written permission from the family for any staff person to reapply sunscreen or insect repellent for the child, using sunscreen or insect repellent that has been supplied by the family for use by their child only.

Children may choose from a variety of experiences, including dramatics, outdoor equipment, puzzles, books, art, and water play. Special enrichment programs may include Critter Caravan, Music with Miss Deirdre, Acting out with Miss Karen.

In very hot weather, we will take children into air-conditioned classrooms. In case of an air quality alert, children or staff with asthma or other lung conditions are advised to stay home.

### Vacation Camp

Depending on interest, the school may choose to operate a 3-day vacation camp during the scheduled school break in December.

## Admissions and Enrollment Procedures

FMRNS accepts applications for children ages 2–5. To be eligible for the 2's program, children must turn two by Oct 15 of their program year. As an inclusive nursery school, FMRNS welcomes new children and families into our larger school community each year. FMRNS admits children of any physical, mental, or emotional ability, race, creed, family status, or national origin.

### Open House

FMRNS holds an Open House on a Saturday in the fall (TBD) if you would like to come tour our school and learn about our program. This is a great opportunity to see the classrooms and ask any questions you may have regarding our philosophy, procedures, and curriculum. Otherwise feel free to contact us for a private tour during regular business hours.

### Tours

If you would like an in-person tour of our school to see our program in action, please reach out to us at (203)838-4266 or [office@fmrns.com](mailto:office@fmrns.com)

### Priority Enrollment for Current Families

Families who currently have children enrolled in FMRNS have access to priority registration before admissions opens to the larger community. During this period, current families may also register younger siblings. Enrollment for “in-house” families will begin in mid-October with a submission deadline of mid-November. All contracts along with the \$75 registration fee must be received by the deadline date in November. Failure to do so may result in forfeiture of your child's spot for the upcoming school year as we open registration to new families.

### Enrollment for New Families

Applications for enrollment are completed online through our website, and will be accepted beginning mid-October, with a deadline for all submissions being mid-December. Enrollment is open for the remainder of the school year for the waitlist and to fill any openings.

The following are given priority status until mid-December when enrolling as a “new family”:

1. Children of Rowayton United Methodist Church members,

2. Children of Five Mile River Nursery School Council members
3. Siblings of past “graduates” of FMRNS. Graduates are children who completed our program.

When we receive your application, you will be emailed an invitation to join our BrightWheel portal through which you can pay the \$75 application fee. Applications will not be accepted without the registration fee and without selecting 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices for placement. Date of application submission does not determine priority in the acceptance process. Applications once submitted are filed until the registration deadline at which time they will all be reviewed, and children will be placed in available spots for the 2025/26 school year. There are many factors that need to be considered, such as siblings of graduated students, alumni children, and gender status as we try to balance our program. We cannot guarantee that any child will be placed according to the family’s first choice. Enrollment may continue throughout the year for any available places. If all priorities are equal, a collaborative decision is made with the administration and members of the Nursery Council as to placement for each child. Thereafter, children are placed according to lottery.

### Notification of Acceptance

New families will be notified by email of acceptance to our program in early January along with a response deadline to let us know whether you accept or decline the placement. If you accept, you will receive a BrightWheel invoice for our non-refundable \$750 deposit (which is deducted from tuition), and an enrollment contract to secure your spot at FMRNS for the following year. If we do not receive your contract and deposit by the deadline, your spot will be offered to a child on the waiting list.

### Tuition for 2026/2027

2-Days/week classes	\$4,751 per year:
3-Days/week classes	\$6,532 per year:
4-Days/week classes	\$8,196 per year:
5-Days/week classes	\$10,096 per year:
5-Day Five’s class	\$13,186 per year:

### Payment Plans for Tuition

There are 2 payment plan options for the year’s tuition after the \$750 deposit is deducted

1. Pay in three equal installments on March 1<sup>st</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup>
2. Pay in full by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

For everyone’s convenience, we strongly encourage you to “auto-pay” your tuition through your BrightWheel account. However, written checks should be addressed to the Five Mile River Nursery School and mailed to 5 Pennoyer Street, Rowayton, CT

06853, Attn: Director. Payment may also be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express and/or Discover Card with a 3.5% convenience fee. Please contact the office if you have any questions regarding your bill.

## Finance Policies

### Registration Fee & Contract Deposit

A non-refundable registration fee of \$75 is due with registration form. Upon acceptance to the program, a non-refundable contract deposit of \$750 will be due to hold your child's spot and will be deducted from tuition payments.

### Late Payment Policy

If tuition payments are not received within 7 days of the invoice due date, a \$50 late fee will be charged. If tuition payments have not been received within 14 days of the due date, your child may not be allowed to attend school until all past due payments have been deposited. If payment is returned by the bank for any reason, the customer is responsible for the payment as well as any fees incurred by Five Mile River Nursery School. If you need to work out an individual payment arrangement, please speak with the Director.

### Tuition Refunds

Each family has made a commitment to FMRNS and its staff. Your child has occupied a registration space and as a result other children may have been turned away. If a family chooses to withdraw for any reason, that family accepts all financial risk. A pro-rated refund will only be considered if the vacated spot has been filled, and the refund will be issued and prorated to the start date of the new family, not the last date the child attended. Refunds will be paid by check. We will do our very best to fill the vacated spot, but if we cannot, the family will be responsible for full payment of the tuition for the school year.

There is no reimbursement in the case of absence due to illness, weather delays/closures or other unforeseen causes.

It is agreed that the school may, in its absolute discretion, abrogate this contract at any time, at which time the parents will be liable for the prorated tuition, and thereafter, all liabilities hereunder shall cease.

### Late Pick-Up Policy

Children who are not picked up on time will be rolled into the next program after 10 minutes and charged accordingly for Lunch Bunch, Enrichment, Siesta, or Late Enrichment.

### Procedure for children not picked up at close of day

- 1 Two staff members will remain with the child until the child is picked up.
2. After 5 minutes, we will attempt to call the family or guardian

3. After 15 minutes, we will attempt to call any of the people listed on the emergency information card.
4. After one hour, if we are unable to reach you or any of your emergency contacts, the local police will be called for further guidance.
5. Under no circumstances are staff members permitted to take a child home with them or drive them anywhere else without family authorization.
6. There is a late pick-up fee of \$50 which will be charged after the caregiver is 15 minutes late for any child left after school has closed for the day.

### Withdrawal

If a family needs to withdraw their child from FMRNS for any reason, please give 30 days' notice of the withdrawal. Your family has made a commitment to the Five Mile River Nursery School and its staff. Your child has occupied a registration space and as a result other children may have been turned away. Therefore, if your family chooses to withdraw for any reason, you accept all financial risk. Your family understands that your child's vacated spot may not be able to be filled, and you will be responsible for full payment of the tuition for the school year. A pro-rated refund will only be considered if the vacated spot is filled. If the vacated spot is filled, the refund will be prorated to the start date of the new family, not the last date your child attended.

### Contract Termination

There is a period of "provisional enrollment" of 60 school days, during which time family, staff and children can assess whether the school will satisfy the needs of all concerned. Our goal with this policy is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, disenrollment, or any other exclusionary measures.

Challenging behaviors are expected in preschool but can also be an indication that there is an unmet need. Every effort will be made to use Scientifically Researched Based Intervention strategies to address challenging behaviors any child may display. We may also pull in any of our consultants for resources and advice. We do not consider exclusionary measures until all other possible interventions have been exhausted. If both family and staff come to mutual agreement that the school is unable to meet the needs of the child, and that it is in the best interest of the child, only then will the child be disenrolled.

### Disenrollment Policy

However, we reserve the right to exclude a child at any time we deem necessary.

Reasons for exclusion include, without limitation, the following:

- Parent violation of the school's Code of Conduct (see page
- Excessive disruptive behavior by the child or family
- Excessive and continuing injuring of other children, adults, or property
- Failure to pay tuition on time, or other violation of the family contract.
- Excessive lateness in picking up a child
- Any other inappropriate conduct, to be determined in our sole discretion.

We reserve the right to exclude the child immediately and without notice under appropriate circumstances, especially if the family is in violation of any policy contained herein, so that our program complies with all federal and state civil rights laws. If the program and the family agree that disenrollment is in the best interest of the child, the Five Mile River Nursery School will make every effort to assist the family to access services and alternative placement.

## **Positive Guidance and Discipline Policy**

It is our policy to use positive guidance techniques as well as an authoritative style of discipline. Authoritative discipline is characterized by reasonable demands and high responsiveness. While teachers have expectations for the children in their care, they also give children the resources and support they need to succeed in solving problems on their own when they occur.

Authoritative teachers are flexible. If there are extenuating circumstances, they will adjust their response accordingly. Discipline then considers all the variables, including the child's behavior, the situation, and so on.

At FMRNS, we believe it is important for our teachers and staff to:

- Listen to the children.
- Allow our children to express feelings and opinions.
- Encourage our children to discuss options.
- Foster independence and reasoning
- Place limits, expectations, and consequences on behavior.
- Express warmth and nurturing
- Act in a fair and consistent manner.
- Set the tone for the children.
- Model the behavior we would like to instill.

We expect conflicts and challenging behaviors to arise as a normal course of the preschool experience. When challenging behaviors occur, the teachers will identify the events that precede the behaviors to determine if there is a pattern. If a detectable pattern exists, the teachers will make necessary adjustments to the classroom environment and our schedule.

When interpersonal conflicts occur, the teachers will employ the following methods of intervention and conflict resolution.

1. Approach quickly and calmly, stopping any harmful behavior.
2. Acknowledge feelings.
3. Gather information from all involved.
4. Restate the problem as was told to you.
5. Ask for ideas and solutions and choose one together.
6. Give follow-up support.

When children are in conflict, we will support their conflict resolution skills by guiding their interactions and providing them with scripts they can use to resolve their interpersonal problems independently. We will state, "There seems to be a problem. How can we resolve it?" We will work to facilitate children's resolution of their conflict.

The classroom teachers will, always, supervise and observe the children in their care. Teachers will always reserve judgment. Teachers may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.

No Physical Punishment such as shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling arms, hair, or ears; no requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.

No Psychological Abuse such as shaming, name calling (no endearments which are belittling), no ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing, making threats or frightening a child, no ostracism, or withholding affection or food.

No Coercion such as rough handling (shoving, pushing, grasping any body part); nor forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down (except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm); no physically forcing a child to perform an action such as eating or cleaning up.

Children who are out of control will be given a safe base to calm down within the classroom, in the company of a staff member. A child will only be removed from the classroom if their behavior is dangerous or disruptive to other children. This would include continuing to throw objects, hitting other children, loud screaming, and a tantrum that does not calm down quickly. The child goes to the hallway or takes a walk with the teacher. The teacher talks with the child about their feelings. The child is not kept out of the classroom for more than 5 minutes. The goal of the teacher is for the child to regain control of their feelings and behaviors. The teacher helps the child to re-enter play or organized activity once they have shown that they are ready.

If behaviors are developmentally inappropriate, persistent, hurtful, or dangerous, the classroom teacher will complete an incident report. The report includes a written description of the behavior, the teacher's intervention, and the child's response to the teacher's intervention. The goal is to communicate clearly and openly with our families and to provide ongoing support for the child.

At times it may be necessary to restrain a child for his or her safety or the safety of others. In this case we will use touch without the child's permission. When touch is used for restraint, the teachers will hold their arms around the child, with the child's body facing away from the teacher. Teachers will use a calm, soothing voice to remind children that they are only being held long enough to ensure their safety and the safety of others. If we must use physical restraint, we will report to the families immediately.

\*All Parents must discuss this Discipline Policy with their teacher or the Director, and staff must discuss this policy with the Director, prior to starting in the program, and acknowledge in writing that they understand and agree to this policy.

## Family-School Relations

The school aims to have excellent relations with families as well as children. Families are considered partners with the school in addressing the needs of their children. All your questions are welcomed. We will consider and address any concerns, while balancing the needs of all families involved in the school in a fair manner. Any family wishing for the translation of any document, or a translator to be present at any time, should contact the school, and every effort will be made for that provision.

### Asking questions about your child

We make ourselves available at drop-off and pick-up as well as at other mutually convenient times to answer your questions about your child. We are also happy to schedule a Zoom call, communicate via BrightWheel, or email when you have questions or concerns. Our staff is well taught in child development and have many years of experience working with young children. Additionally, staff have been trained in the use of our assessment tools, specifically the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards/Documentation Observation Teaching System. If you have a question about your child's behavior, whether it happens at school, home or elsewhere, you can and should use your child's teacher as a resource. Teachers will also seek families' specific ideas for working with their child when at the program.

### Parent/Teacher Conferences

Teachers hold scheduled conferences in the fall and spring to discuss your child's development. They provide observations on skills and behaviors in all key areas (i.e., social interaction, gross motor, and fine motor skills). Conferences also may be requested by the teacher or family at any time.

### Child Assessments

Assessments are an integral part of our program, which we use to support children's learning and allow us to tailor our activities to help your child develop in all developmental domains.

We provide the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as a form of an initial screening for each child, from which we plan for each individual child's needs as they pertain to our program and the goals of the family.

Additionally, we observe children using the Connecticut Preschool Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) which is a set of benchmarks on a developmental continuum.

Families are considered an integral part of the assessment process, helping to set goals with the teacher for their child, and providing information on the child that may not be observable in school. Please help us to plan for your child's learning experiences by responding to our Family Background Questionnaire.

In partnership with the Norwalk ACTS Transition to Kindergarten Workgroup, FMRNS also administers the Preschool Early Literacy Instrument (PELL) 3 times per year.

### Teacher-Family Problem Resolution

If you feel you have a problem with your child's teacher, we encourage you to first discuss it with the teacher directly. However, if this approach is not satisfactory for any reason, please contact the Director who oversees family-teacher relations. The Director will work with you and the teacher to bring about resolution. If for any reason this approach does not meet your needs, the Personnel Committee is available to hear your concerns or complaints.

If you feel that your concerns are not addressed, the State of Connecticut provides a formal complaint procedure through its Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Childcare Licensing.

State of CT Office of Early Child  
410 Capitol Avenue [MS#12DAC](#)  
P.O. Box 340308  
Hartford, CT 06134-0308  
1-800-282-6063 (Toll free)  
1-800-439-0437 (Toll free)

### Annual Survey

Each year the school requests your feedback through an anonymous survey. This survey helps us to reflect on our practice and to plan for improvements to the school. It is important that all families participate by responding to the survey, which is also required to maintain our nationally accredited status. We share the results of the survey in our school-wide newsletter. You are also welcome at any time to view the actual surveys and how they are tabulated by making an inquiry to the office.

### Parent Workshops

FMRNS plans and hosts occasional workshops that are of interest to our parents, often utilizing our early childhood consultant to conduct them. Past themes have been Building Self-Esteem, Transitioning to Kindergarten, Setting Limits, and Encouraging Independence.

## Access to the Facility

The FMRNS operating hours are 8:30am-4:00pm Monday-Thursday and 8:30am-3:30pm on Fridays. Our summer program hours are 9:00am-1:00pm. Children may not be dropped-off or picked up outside of those hours, barring extenuating circumstances. The school building and church are kept always locked. Only staff and church trustees have access to the door code. Please ring both doorbells and someone will come and let you in. We are always happy to greet families and offer a word of welcome and farewell at drop-off and pick-up each day, if possible. For extended conversations about your child, we will make an appointment for a private conference at a mutually convenient time. If you plan to remain on the premises after drop-off, we ask that you park in the community parking lot and walk the block to school, to help facilitate room on the street for other families to arrive.

## Visiting and Volunteering

We welcome family and special guest visits to our school to share birthdays, family or religious traditions, a particular talent, a story, or simply to observe the class day. If you would like to spend some time with your child, bring grandparents or a friend to visit, or volunteer to help with a special activity in your child's classroom, please feel free to discuss this with the teachers. If you do drop in unannounced, please report to the office first.

## Communication Policy

### Communication Structure

Your child's teachers are the primary point of contact. If you have a question about your child or if you would like to share a concern, please send an email to the designated class email address, and a teacher will get back to you within 24 hours. To best meet your child's needs, we encourage families to raise concerns and work collaboratively to find mutually satisfying solutions that the staff can incorporate into classroom practice.

### Grievances & Suggestions

We find that issues can be positively resolved by working together. If you have a concern related to your child in the classroom setting, please schedule a meeting to speak with the teacher. If this approach is not satisfactory, then please contact the Director. If speaking with the teacher and the Director has not provided an acceptable outcome, please contact the chairperson(s) of the Nursery School Council. If the problem is not resolved, you may contact the CT OEC.

### Confidentiality of Children's Information

At FMRNS we make sure that information about your child and their progress is kept confidential. Our child files are locked in the main office and can be opened by the teachers, the health care consultant, the Director and administrative coordinator and regulatory authorities. Teachers and parents can be given access

to the files by the preceding staff. The child file contains the Child Record Form, the Medical, Illness, and Injury reports, and any Action Plans. Parents and those who have been designated as legally responsible for the care and well-being of the child may have immediate access to the file.

Program staff provides support and information only to family members who have been designated as legally responsible for the care and well-being of the child as indicated on the Student Record Form in your BrightWheel account. Before sharing information about a child with other providers, agencies, or programs or allowing the child to be observed, teachers will obtain written consent from the family.

## BrightWheel

BrightWheel is our online portal for program registrations, billing, and paperwork, including general and emergency contact information, health history, daily attendance records, any questions as to arrival and pick-up, accident, incident, or health checks. Please make sure your child's account is accurate, up to date and complete always. **Be sure to select “persistent” notifications**, so you will be alerted to any messages which may be critical in the event of an emergency.

To sign in and out on the app, open to scan the QR code with your phone. Your children will appear in the app with their photo and a bar to check in or out, and a menu to select the “room” such as “Studio,” “Rowayton Station,” or “Lunch Bunch.” You will be taken to a health screen and asked to acknowledge that the child is healthy. Once the child's health is affirmed, you will put in their personal identification number and sign the screen. A green “SUCCESS” screen will be displayed when fully checked in or out.

The OEC requires accurate records be kept of all attendance. It is imperative that you take responsibility for checking your child in and out each day. Your child may not be accounted for if not securely checked in and out daily.

## Website

The FMRNS website at [www.fmrns.com](http://www.fmrns.com) contains a wealth of information about our history, our educational philosophy, our teaching staff, our programs, our school calendar, our family handbook and enrollment forms.

## Newsletter

School and Parent Council Newsletters and photos will be distributed via BrightWheel and email

## School Calendar

You can find the current and upcoming school year calendars on our website. FMRNS School follows the Norwalk Public Schools for closings and delays only. The nursery school functions on its own calendar. When the Norwalk Schools are closed for Professional Days, we are open for conferences. FMRNS does not make

up missed days. Please contact the Director to address with the Nursery School Council any situation that might be considered exceptional.

### Parent Resources

The FMRNS teachers, consultants, and administrators are happy to help to locate, contact, and relevant community resources to support the needs and interests of the children and families at FMRNS.

### Translator

Upon request, the school will contact a translator to help communicate about a child's progress or any other information in the language of their choosing. In addition, we can use the website [freetranslation.com](http://freetranslation.com) to instantly translate a conversation, a flyer, or a letter.

## Food Service

### Nut Free Policy

Due to the possibility of life-threatening allergies, FMRNS is a nut-free environment. **DO NOT INCLUDE ANY FOODS CONTAINING NUTS, NUT PRODUCTS OR FOOD PROCESSED WITH NUTS IN YOUR CHILD'S LUNCH.** We must also be informed if your child has any other allergies to food or other substances.

### Snack

Organic and non-GMO and nut-free snacks are provided by the school daily. We follow government child nutrition guidelines for the amount and types of food we provide. Our snacks are mostly organic and consist of 2 food groups, one being a fruit or veggie-based item, the other a grain. Snack items served are posted daily on BrightWheel.

### Lunch

Children who stay for Lunch Bunch bring their own lunches (please include an ice pack in the lunchbox) It is our policy to allow children to choose from any food, in any order, that has been provided for them. However, we will encourage them to eat their healthy choices first.

No food is served that may present a choking hazard for children under 4, including but not limited to, grapes; hot dogs; carrots; pretzels; popcorn. Food *may* be cut into small pieces to prevent choking.

### Birthdays and Celebrations

Please note that due to the presence of life-threatening allergies, we no longer allow families to bring in special snacks or food for celebrations. In lieu of food, we suggest you come to class to read your child's favorite book, make party hats, play party games, or sing and dance with us.

The teachers will be responsible for planning cooking and food-related learning experiences which will be prepared at school. We welcome your suggestions and help in planning those experiences.

## Health and Safety Policies

### Medication Policy

FMRNS will administer only certain oral, topical, EpiPen or inhalant medications regularly necessary for a child's safety, allergic or other physical condition of the child, according to state regulations. Only staff certified to administer medication may give medication to a child according to the following procedure. We must be notified if the medication is a controlled drug, which will be stored in accordance with 21a-262-10 of the RCSA. Non-prescription topical medications will be stored away from food and inaccessible to children, except for EpiPen's, which will be stored within the classroom for the child that needs it. However, if a child is ill and requires temporary medication, the families must keep their child at home.

According to state regulations, any child who receives medications at school must have an "Authorization for the Administration of Prescription Medications by Day Care Personnel" form on file from both the child's doctor and the child's family or legal guardian before the child will be permitted to receive any medications from the authorized staff member. Please understand that your child may not be able to attend school if the proper, completed authorization is not on file at the school.

**If families report any health conditions on their child's health form, they must also provide the school with a MEDICAL CARE PLAN for that condition.**

### Non-Prescription Topical Medications

Families must provide written authorization for staff to apply non-prescription skin lotion or diaper ointment, non-prescription insect repellants, non-prescription sunscreen protectants that are free of amino benzoic acid (PABA) or its derivatives. The permission form is provided in the packet of forms to be submitted upon enrollment and before attendance at school.

### Flu Vaccine

The Connecticut State Department of Health requires that all children enrolled in childcare programs have a flu shot. The shot needs to be given before December 31st in the school year the child is attending. The record of the shot needs to be on the Health Record or on a separate form.

### Medical Exemption

Connecticut Public Act No. 21-6 has eliminated the religious exemption to school vaccine requirements. Only medical exemptions to vaccination requirements are permitted. If your child's physician determines that vaccinations are medically unsafe for your child or that an alternative vaccination schedule is medically beneficial, then this form must be completed.

## Non-toxic environment policy

Our program strives to provide a safe, non-toxic environment. We partner with Green Pest Management to provide integrated pest control services that will eliminate or reduce harmful chemical exposure. Additionally, we clean, disinfect, and maintain our premises daily with non-toxic cleaning supplies and disinfectants. We subscribe to the Consumer Product Safety Commission product recall notices which we will post or forward to staff and families.

## Handwashing

All people are required to wash their hands upon arrival. We will wash our hands when we move to another room or group; before and after using the sensory table or play dough; before and after cooking, eating, or administering medications; after cleaning, handling pets, sand, dirt, or garbage; after using the toilet or handling body fluids.

## Pet Policy

Dogs and other personal pets are not allowed on the premises. Please keep your pets secured away from the playground and classrooms unless specifically invited inside. We cannot be responsible for animals brought onto our premises by families or others, and we must maintain the safety of all children, staff, caregivers, and families.

## Clothing/Backpacks

We will be playing hard, so children should be dressed casually for close encounters with paint, paste, sand, dirt, flour, water, and clay. Please do not wear your best clothes because we cannot guarantee their unstained return. Please wear sturdy shoes for safety while running and climbing during active play outdoors or in the Fellowship Hall.

We will also come in contact with water in sensory experiences and while washing up, so a spare set of clothes, including underwear, socks, seasonal pants and shirt, clearly labeled, should be brought to school at the beginning of the year, replaced, when necessary, in case a change is necessary.

Please be sure to label all your children's clothes clearly. Help your child develop autonomy by allowing them to take off and hang up their own things on their own coat hook, and they will know personally where it is, and if they brought it to school.

## Winter Clothing Policy

We will go outside every day, at the discretion of the Director, provided the temperature is 20 degrees F or warmer, so please dress for the weather. On cold days children need warm clothes including hats, mittens, snow pants and boots. Because we respect children's autonomy and seek to develop their independent

self-care skills, we do not presume to know whether your child feels hot or cold, so we honor what they tell us about whether they need their coats, hats, or mittens. Children learn immediately how warm or cold it is outside and will request the appropriate clothing when they need it. Please be sure to provide all appropriate clothing for the day in a bag or backpack if your child chooses not to wear it to school because they may request it later. We do honor families' requests and will insist your child wear any clothing you deem appropriate, but you must give us specific instructions, so we do not follow the policy outlined above. Even rain will not daunt us, so raincoats and boots are appropriate on rainy days. It must be a near monsoon to keep us inside!

### Toilet Learning Policy

Children aged 3 and older are expected to be able to use the toilet independently. We encourage children and families to learn to use the toilet with kind adult support. Families should send their children in the same underclothing they wear at home. All children will be encouraged to use the toilet while at school. The social setting can be very motivating for children to learn to use the toilet, and when your child is ready, we encourage families to put them in "big kid" underwear, around age 3. We do not leave children in soiled clothing longer than 10 minutes. We understand and expect some accidents so, please provide multiple changes of clothing for this possibility. Your preschool age (3-5) child will be expected to wipe or to change wet clothing by him or herself. Staff will help your child learn these self-care skills by "talking them through" the process. Children will be encouraged to toilet themselves independently.

We will instruct the child verbally how to wipe themselves, but not do it for them. If your child is not ready to learn to use the toilet independently, staff and families will plan together to help and encourage the development of these routine selfcare skills. If your child has a special need, we will plan together to make the appropriate accommodation to include your child. In case of soiled clothing, we will remove and dispose of any soiled underclothing and return other clothing the in a waterproof bag. Children will be changed in the designated changing area in the children's bathroom for their privacy.

### Religious Policy

The Five Mile River Nursery School is a non-denominational preschool; however, it is owned and operated by the Rowayton United Methodist Church and is part of its Mission and Outreach to the community. While we do not instruct children in Methodist doctrine, our religious faith informs what we do.

Parents will be invited to participate at no charge in a Mid-Week Christian Education program on Wednesdays from 8:30-9:15 am. The program is designed to introduce children, in a developmentally appropriate fashion, stories and traditions from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Children will hear a story from the Bible and do a craft relating to the story. A maximum of 12 children may sign up for the school year program.

At FMRNS, we celebrate the traditions of the children in the classroom. Families are encouraged to bring the religious or traditional symbols of their own faith perspective to school and to share their culture and faith traditions with the class.

We hope that this policy helps to give honor and support to the diversity of each family and their values. We feel that it is better to discuss and celebrate with the children their religious values, rather than try to ignore them, as if they did not exist. In this, as in our entire curriculum, we strive to develop a child's independence and self-esteem.

## Supervision Policies

There will always be a minimum of 2 staff on the premises. Teaching staff always supervise children by sight and sound. Teaching staff supervise by positioning themselves to see as many children as possible. When children are in the bathroom, teachers will stand to see both the bathroom and the classroom; children will be escorted to the bathroom from the upstairs classrooms.

There will be one staff person per 10 children or fraction thereof for ages 3 to 5 on the premises and supervising children indoors, outdoors or at naptime, always during program hours. For children aged 2, the maximum group size will be 8, with one staff person per every 4 children always.

The maximum number of children allowed on the premises at any one time is 48. The maximum number of children allowed in each of the upstairs classrooms is 12; downstairs classrooms is 13.

The maximum number of children allowed in the Fellowship Hall is 27, playground is 37. Children under 3 will be supervised in a maximum group size of 8 children with 2 teachers always present. On the playground, children under 3 will be allowed to use only the equipment and sandbox lower than 5 feet high. The area on the front porch will only be used under close supervision by at least one staff member.

We group children by age for the morning preschool and two's programs; however, extended day and summer programs are multi-age groupings for children aged 32 months and up.

### Lost Child Policy

While at the Five Mile River Nursery School, utmost care is taken to supervise children by sight **AND** sound, and to always be aware of every child's whereabouts. If a child is missing, the following actions will be taken by the staff at FMRNS:

1. We will check to see that the child was signed in for the day and then search the entire church and school grounds.

2. The Director will be notified of the situation so they can proceed with the next step of action.
3. The Director will assign one person to recheck the grounds. He/she will then question the remaining staff as to what the child was wearing and where and when they last saw the child.
4. The Director will then call the police and report the situation and follow their advice.
5. The Director will call the family or caregiver and report the situation. They will ask the family to come to school the way they normally bring the child in case the child has found its way home.
6. When the family arrives at school, if the child is still missing the family will be asked to return home and stay there in case the child returns home.
7. The staff not involved in the search will continue a normal program day by taking care of the rest of the children.
8. Headcounts will be taken before leaving and returning from field trips.
9. If a child is lost during the field trip, the adults present, staff and families, will be questioned as to what the child was wearing and where and when they last saw the child. They will then proceed with the trip while the lead teacher notifies the officials at the venue and take their advice.
10. The lead teacher will then notify the police of the situation and follow their advice.
11. If a family member is not on the trip, the lead teacher will notify the Director who will then notify the family and proceed as above.

At the end of the trip if the child is still missing the lead teacher will stay at the venue and continue searching for the child. The remainder of the group will return to school.

## Pick-up and Drop-off Procedures

During drop-off and pickup of children, please drive DOWN Pennoyer Street approaching from the top of the hill. There is no parking permitted anywhere on the uphill side of Pennoyer or at the top of Pennoyer, north of Milton place.

Approximately 10 cars can park along Pennoyer Street at a time. Please be considerate of all drivers by parking as close to the sidewalk as well as the car in front of you. If there is no space available, please keep circling until there is. Please refrain from staying in your parking place for more than three minutes during pick-up and drop-off times. If you wish to remain at the program for any reason, please park in the village lot and walk one block to school.

1. Do not double park.
2. Do not block driveways.
3. Do not park in no parking zones.
4. Please turn off your engine so as not to expose children on the playground to harmful exhaust fumes.

5. Do not leave children under the age of 12 unsupervised in a motor vehicle.

Caregivers are required to sign children in and out using the BrightWheel app. Touchless sign in and out using the QR code hung on clipboards on the playground fence and by the entrance to the building. You must answer the check-in questions to help protect the health of our community. The time of drop off and pick up will be recorded in your child's BrightWheel feed every day.

We love it when you walk to school, which helps ease the parking crunch, but please do not allow your pets to enter the playground or be accessible to children. As gentle as your pets may be, they may not react gently to children who could surprise them.

## Abuse and Neglect Policy

All children have the right to be free from abuse and neglect. The Five Mile River Nursery School has zero tolerance for abuse and neglect and is responsible for the prevention of such behavior and for the protection of children.

All staff at FMRNS are considered "mandated reporters" of child neglect or abuse by the State of Connecticut. As such, they are required as individuals to report directly to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) any suspected abuse or neglect. After staff make a report to DCF they must also immediately inform the Director of their action.

Mandated reporters are not obligated to inform the families that they have made a report to DCF about their child. However, depending on circumstance, it may be necessary and/or beneficial to do so.

If the child is suspected of being abused or neglected by a staff member, then the Director is required to immediately inform the family.

The Director may refer health care professionals to the family to assess the cause of the child's injuries, or they may refer mental health professionals or members of the clergy to provide families support and guidance.

If in the case of serious physical or sexual abuse, families may not be informed until after DCF has been notified, to protect the child or facilitate a criminal investigation.

Mandated reporters are required to give their name when they make a report to DCF; however, they may request anonymity to protect their privacy from the family. The identity of the reporter would not be disclosed unless written consent is given, or unless mandated by law (CGS section 17a-28 and 17a-101). The reporter's identity is disclosed only to a DCF employee, a law enforcement officer, an appropriate state's attorney, an appropriate assistant attorney general,

a judge and all necessary parties in a court proceeding, a state childcare licensing agency, executive director of any institution, school or facility, or superintendent of schools.

Staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting abuse and neglect, they are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is proven that the report was intended to do harm.

If DCF suspects or knows that the reporter knowingly made a false report, his or her identity shall be disclosed to the appropriate law enforcement agency and to the perpetrator of the alleged abuse.

Staff are given formal training to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and its prevention through mandated reporter training seminars and by distribution of this policy upon hiring or yearly renewal of contract.

Should a staff member witness abuse or neglect by another staff member, they must make a report to DCF and notify the Director immediately. If staff witness the Director abuse or neglect a child, they must report to DCF and the Chairperson of the Nursery School Council immediately.

Reports to DCF must be made as soon as practicable, but not more than 12 hours after suspecting abuse or neglect, and all reports to the Hotline are tape-recorded. The reporter must submit a written report to DCF within 48 hours of making the report using form DCF-136. A copy of this report must be submitted to the Director or the Chairperson of the Nursery School Council. The required written documents are kept as a confidential record in the school office. All records are saved for four years.

If DCF, based on the results of an investigation, finds reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected by a staff member or a classroom volunteer, the Nursery School Council Personnel Committee will immediately suspend the staff member with pay and will not diminish or terminate any benefits due the employee. The suspension shall remain in effect until the FMRNS Nursery School Council can review the case and determine whether there is cause for termination. Volunteers in the classroom will be suspended from any volunteer duty until the DCF, and the Nursery Council review the case.

All accidents, injuries, and abuse/neglect reports are recorded, filed, and locked in the Nursery School office.

The 24-hour child abuse and neglect hotline number is 1-800-842-2288.  
The DCF Norwalk office number is 203-899-1400.

## Signs of Abuse or Neglect

	CHILD	INDICATORS	CARETAKER INDICATORS
	Physical Signs	Child's Behavior	
<b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Unexplained bruises, welts or abrasions (-in various stages of healing; in shape of object (cord, roped, belt buckle); human bite marks)</li> <li>*Unexplained burns (- cigarette (on soles, palms, back, buttocks)—immersion (sock or glove-like)</li> <li>*Unexplained broken bones (- skull, nose, facial structure.— in various stages of healing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Reports injury by a family member (or threatened injury)</li> <li>*Shrinks from adults' touch</li> <li>*Frightened of family</li> <li>Afraid to go home</li> <li>*Withdrawn or aggressive</li> <li>*Complains of soreness, moves uncomfortably</li> <li>*Wears clothing inappropriate to weather</li> <li>*Reluctant to change clothes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Offers vague, illogical, contradictory or no explanation of child's injury</li> <li>*Attempts to conceal child's injury</li> <li>*Delays or does not seek, medical treatment for injury when warranted</li> <li>*Uses harsh discipline inappropriate to child's age and transgression</li> <li>*Has unrealistic expectations of child</li> <li>*Significantly misperceives child (e.g. sees child as bad, stupid, different)</li> <li>*Misuses alcohol or drugs</li> </ul>
<b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Tom, stained or bloody underwear</li> <li>*Difficulty walking or sitting</li> <li>*Pain or itching in genital area</li> <li>*Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia</li> <li>*Frequent urinary or genital infections</li> <li>*Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Reports sexual assault by caretaker</li> <li>*Reluctant to change clothes</li> <li>*Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior</li> <li>*Bizarre sexual behavior or detailed sexual knowledge, especially in young children</li> <li>*Poor peer relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Extremely protective or jealous of child</li> <li>*Sexually abused as a child</li> <li>*Misuses alcohol or drugs</li> <li>*Non-abusing caretaker/spouse is frequently absent from home</li> </ul>
<b>EMOTIONAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Speech disorders</li> <li>*Lags in physical development</li> <li>*Failure to thrive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Sucking, biting, rocking in older child</li> <li>*Antisocial, destructive (and self-destructive)</li> <li>*Sleep disorders, inhibition of play</li> <li>*Compliant/passive or aggressive/demanding</li> <li>*Inappropriately adult or infantile</li> <li>*Developmental lags (emotional, intellectual)</li> <li>*Attempts suicide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Excessively blames or berattles child</li> <li>*Repeatedly ignores or rejects child</li> <li>*Treats siblings unequally</li> <li>*Seems unconcerned about child's problems</li> <li>*Unreasonable demands or impossible expectations without regard to child's developmental capability</li> </ul>
<b>NEGLECT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Constant hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress</li> <li>*Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods</li> <li>*Lack of needed medical or dental care</li> <li>*Abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Arrives early at school, stays late, often absent; often falls asleep in class</li> <li>*Begs, steals food</li> <li>*Constant fatigue, listlessness</li> <li>*Says there is no caretaker</li> <li>*Shunned by peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Misuses alcohol or drugs</li> <li>*Maintains chaotic home</li> <li>*Consistently fails to keep appointments</li> <li>*Demonstrates apathy or hopelessness</li> <li>*Has mental health problems.</li> </ul>

## Emergency Preparedness Plans

### Weather Related Closings/Delays

FMRNS follows Norwalk Public Schools recommendations for closings and delays.

- If NPS are closed, FMRNS is closed.
- If NPS has a one-hour delay, FMRNS will open at 10:00
- If NPS have a two-hour delay, FMRNS will open at 10:30
- If the public schools close early, all families are advised to pick up their children as soon as possible, rather than wait until the designated closing time.

We will send an email and a BrightWheel message to all families as soon as schedule changes are known. We do NOT offer remote learning if school is canceled due to weather.

### Injury

1. The staff member qualified for first aid will administer first aid.
2. We will attempt to contact the family, guardian or alternate as specified on the child's emergency card. It is the family's responsibility to keep information up to date.
3. We will attempt to contact the child's physician or dentist.
4. If we cannot contact the child's physician, we will do any or all the following:
  - a. Call another physician.
  - b. Call an ambulance.
  - c. Have the child taken to an emergency hospital in the company of a staff member, in a staff vehicle or program vehicle.
5. Any expenses incurred under 4 above will be borne by the child's family.
6. If necessary, we will arrange for substitute staff.
7. An accident/incident/illness report form will be filed in the office and a copy given to the family through the BrightWheel app. Any critical injury resulting in hospitalization, loss of life or limb, physical or psychological abuse, neglect or unusual lack of supervision shall also be reported to the NAEYC within 72 hours of the incident.

Staff will bring their own cell phones on field trips for use in an emergency.

### Fire

1. Teachers will take a head count of children and escort them in an orderly fashion to an area safe from fire and emergency vehicles.
2. Assistant teachers and aides will follow children out, bringing all notebooks with emergency information on all children, all attendance clipboards, keys to parsonage, and emergency kits, and will close doors to contain fire.
3. Director will pull fire alarm, if not already sounded.
4. Children will be walked to the far corner of the playground to wait. In the event of inclement weather, children will be taken to the Parsonage next door. Families will be called to pick up their children as soon as possible from the parsonage or the back parking lot.

### Civil Preparedness Plan

1. The Directors are responsible for the preparation and execution of all emergency plans.
2. During any civil emergency (environmental hazard due to weather or hazardous materials: fire, flood, bomb threat, explosion) the staff will monitor the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) radio station for our area (WNLK 1350 am or WGMX 95.9 FM).
3. We will take one or more of the following actions as quickly as possible:

- a. Take shelter within the facility away from all windows and glass (the bathrooms). We will turn off all lights, close all windows and doors and shut off other means of ventilation (fans).
- b. Temporarily evacuate to the outside as per our Fire Evacuation Plan.
- c. Evacuate our facility by transporting children, via family or guardian, to their homes.
- d. Evacuate the area per direction of the Mayor or his Deputy in Charge to the designated shelter facility (for example: The Rowayton Community Center or Brien McMahon High School depending on the circumstances and the advice from the city). Staff and Directors may provide transportation, or bus service may be called, such as WHEELS or First Student, Inc. An evacuation kit containing name tags, water, radio, markers, storybooks, blanket, snacks, flashlight, first aid kit, batteries, dust masks, emergency phone lists, and rope will be taken to the evacuation point. The answering machine at the Nursery School will be updated to give information to families calling in.
- e. Attendance will be taken regularly throughout the emergency.

The Director of the center will determine the reopening of the facility based on advice of the City of Norwalk Emergency Operations Center. The Director will contact the mayor's office to determine whether our school may re-open, even if the Norwalk Public Schools remain closed.

A lock-down policy is in place to handle any emergency that may be deemed harmful, is reviewed with staff during the annual review of policies at the beginning of each school year and is practiced throughout the year during emergency drills. Please be aware of CT General Statutes 53-206 and 53-206c prohibiting any dangerous weapon or facsimile of a firearm on the premises of any childcare center unless the carrier of such a weapon is a peace officer.

## Illness Policies

### Plan for the care of a sick child

1. The Five Mile River Nursery School will use discretion to excuse any child who appears to be ill.
2. The child may be isolated within the classroom in a quiet corner arranged for his/her comfort until a family member arrives.
3. We will attempt to contact the family, guardian, or emergency contact.
4. A staff member will remain with the child until picked up.

### Rules for Absence and Exclusion from School

Families and guardians are asked to notify the school via BrightWheel by 10am if a child will be absent due to illness. Please do not send a child to school who has a cold, any communicable disease, or if any of the following circumstances are present:

- Fever over 101 degrees orally or 100.4 degrees axillary
- Mouth sores with drooling.
- If awaiting the results of a throat culture
- Severe abdominal pain or discomfort continuing more than 2 hours and/or associated with fever or other signs/symptoms.
- Blood in stools
- Acute diarrhea (twice the usual frequency of bowel movements to a looser consistency within a period of 24 hours)
- Sore throat or severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin; red eyes with discharge until treatment initiated.
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Difficult or rapid breathing or wheezing
- Skin rashes accompanied by fever or behavior change.
- Vomiting illness: 2 or more episodes in previous 24 hours until vomiting resolves.

The exclusion period for patients (whether FMRNS staff, families, or children) with communicable disease is stated in the table below. Communicable disease must be reported to the Department of Health at 203-854-7776 by the staff member, child's physician, or family.

The Five Mile River Nursery School is required to report to all families the following Communicable diseases, while maintaining the privacy of the staff person or child, by posting a notice in each classroom and by email to each family:

Disease	Time of exclusion from school
Chicken Pox	Six days from onset or until all sores have dried and crusted.
Diphtheria	Until two negative cultures have been obtained by a physician.
German Measles (Rubella)	Six days from onset
Impetigo	On certification by a physician that patient is under adequate treatment (24 hours after initial treatment)
Fungus	On certification by a physician that patient is under adequate treatment.
Ringworm of Scalp	On certification by a physician that patient is under adequate treatment.
Hepatitis A Virus	As directed by Health Department after appropriate treatment has been initiated to children and staff; or physician certification that a child is cured.
Ivy or Shrub Poisoning	Not excluded.
Measles	Four days after rash appears.
Meningococcal-	
Meningitis	Until certified by physician as cured.
Mumps	Until glands are normal or 9 days after onset.
Pediculosis (Head Lice)	Until all signs of nits are gone or after first treatment. T

Pinkeye	On certification by a physician that patient is under adequate treatment or 24 hours after first treatment.
Poliomyelitis	Ten days
Rash	Until diagnosed by physician plus certification that patient is under adequate treatment.
Scabies	Until diagnosed by physician plus certification that patient is under adequate treatment.
Scarlet Fever	On certification by a physician that patient has completed treatment.
Streptococcal Sore Throat	On certification by a physician that patient is under adequate treatment and until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever.
Tuberculosis (Active)	Upon physician certification that patient is cured.
Unspecified Respiratory Illness	Until diagnosis & certification of health care provider
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	Until 5 days of appropriate antibiotics are completed.
Covid-19	5 days isolated after positive test; return to school 5 days since symptoms first appeared and 24 hours fever-free without medication; advised wearing mask until 10 days post positive test.

All persons (staff, children, and families) are permitted to return to school 24 hours fever free without medication. If families report any health condition on their child's health form, they must also provide the school with a MEDICAL CARE PLAN for that condition.

Flu shots are required immunizations and must be administered annually in the same flu season between August 1 and December 31. Children who have not received the flu vaccine by December 31 must be excluded from school for the duration of influenza season, March 31, or until they receive at least one dose of the influenza vaccine.

If your physician has ordered a special medical or dental management procedure, an adult trained in the procedure will be on-site whenever the child is present.

## Outside Consultants

FMRNS has contracted with an early childhood educational consultant, a licensed nurse, a licensed dental hygienist, and a social service consultant in order that they may advise and support our program, staff, and families each year. Each shall be available to make an annual review of pertinent policies and in-service education programs; be available by telecommunication for advice regarding specific problems; and be available to visit the program, staff, or families to consult either individually or as a program seminar.

Our nurse consultant visits our program on a weekly basis until all children turn two years of age, and then monthly thereafter, to observe all environmental and health factors. In addition, the Health Consultant reviews the health and immunization records of children and staff; reviews the contents, storage and plan for the maintenance of the first aid kit; the general overall health and development of the children; the diaper changing and toileting areas, procedures and hand washing; reviewing the policies, procedures and required documentation for the administration of medications, including petitions for special medication; and assisting in the review of individual care plans as needed.

While Consultants are not members of our staff, families may feel free to consult with our consultants or staff as their first resource for advice or help.

### Our school consultants

#### Nurse Consultant:

Jean McPhilmy, MS, RN, CNE  
5 Charcoal Road  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
203-434-1112

#### Social Service Consultant:

Betsy Perry  
239 Barberrry Road  
Southport, CT 06890  
203-216-2029  
203-255-8645

#### Early Childhood Education Consultant:

Ms. Kathy Coppola  
237 Strawberry Hill Ave  
Norwalk, CT 06851  
203-866-5789  
203-554-5658

## Care and Education of the Special Needs Child

FMRNS considers the needs of all children to be unique. We endeavor to respect, support, and nurture the emotional, intellectual, and physical capacities of every child we serve. We carefully observe each child during the program day and individualize our curriculum plans to, as described by child psychologist and educational theorist, Lev Vygotsky, “scaffold each child’s learning within their zone of proximal development.” We call on families, staff, and community educational resources to assist with planning for your child’s development. Services may include but are not limited to speech and language specialists, occupational therapists, social workers, child psychologists and education consultants to best meet your child’s developmental needs. Children with diagnosed special needs are welcome in our program. We make every accommodation possible to provide a well-rounded and appropriate preschool experience to include all children.

When staff suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, we document and explain our concerns using our observations and evaluate the observation using the CT ELDS continuum. At the earliest possible time we will arrange for a private conference with the family and provide them with information about our suggestions for next steps, such as evaluation by a doctor or other specialist, and furnish resources and contacts so families can access diagnostic evaluation and support.

FMRNS has arranged for consultation once a month with pediatric Occupational Therapist Jane Erbe OTR/L. Classroom experiences will be observed and teachers will collaborate on strategies, to support children with their Sensory Integration. Families may contract with Jane Erbe to receive private services while their child is at the program.

## Our Connection to the Community

The Five Mile River Nursery School is intricately connected to its surrounding community. The Director serves on the Norwalk Early Childhood Council and helps to plan children's Transition to Kindergarten and training programs for staff. Additionally, our school plans family education and enrichment programs on a variety of topics of interest such as Discipline, Literacy, Brain Development, Assessment, and other topics as suggested by families.

We keep families informed of interesting activities available to families, such as the annual Fire Station Open House. We also give families the opportunity to participate in RUMC Mission projects, such as food and warm clothing drives for local and international needs. Be sure to check the bulletin boards and your child's cubbies for information on these events.

With the church, we will also sponsor "Food of the Month" drives for the Norwalk Emergency Shelter; "The Gift of Giving" anonymous Christmas gifts for children of shelter families; Easter Baskets, two each for shelter children, one containing treats and books, the other containing necessary health supplies such as soap and toothpaste.

Also located in the office is a resource guide to all the area support services, including information on how to contact local Health Departments, Help lines and Hotlines, Schools, Counseling, ESL Classes, Adoption Services Transportation and other community, Advocacy and Government Organizations.

Staff work together with community schools to facilitate a smooth transition to public or private Kindergarten. Staff work with local Associations for the Education of Young Children as well as the Norwalk Early Childhood Councils and area towns' Kindergarten Administrators and Teachers, to share appropriate skills

inventories and assessments, to inform the receiving school of your child's experiences, development, skills, and knowledge.

## Organizational Plan

### Five Mile River Nursery School Council

Our FMRNS Council is made up of volunteers and consists of the Directors, church members who represent the interests of the church, and nursery school parents who are responsible for all the decisions that affect the day-to-day operation of the school, including approval of its policies and programs and any special events it might sponsor. We work together in support of our continuing commitment to excellence in achieving the highest standards of quality in early care and education.

**Chairperson:** Shall set agendas and preside at all meetings of the Council and Nominating Committees, sign letters and other documents for the Council, represent the school in the absence of the Director, serve as a member of the Nursery School Council Personnel Committee, and see that all Nursery School Council activities are represented to the RUMC Life and Ministry Council.

**Vice Chairperson:** Shall assume the duties of the Chairperson in his/her absence, provide general assistance to the Chairperson in all functions, and serve as a member of the Nursery School Council Personnel and Nominating Committees.

**Co-Chairpersons:** When the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson wish to equally divide their responsibilities, they may be effectively Co-Chairpersons.

**Director(s):** Shall serve on the Council ex-officio, with vote, and represent the school's administrative and educational concerns, including staffing issues. He/she shall be responsible for implementing the Council's policies and procedures and making recommendations to the Council for safe, healthy, and effective operation of the nursery school and its programs.

**Finance Officer:** Shall present current financial statements during the regular Council meetings. The Finance Officer shall assist the Director in drafting the budget for the coming year and review important budget exceptions. Tuition, fees, scholarships, and tuition assistance will be reviewed annually by the Finance Officer within the context of budget development. The Finance Officer will submit a budget for the coming year to the Nursery School Council for review prior to submission to the RUMC Finance Committee and Life and Ministry Council as necessary for approval. The Finance Officer shall also be responsible for submitting monthly financial statements to the RUMC Finance Committee and the Life and Ministry Council. The Financial Officer shall serve in an advisory and support capacity to the Director and the Council in terms of financial planning and management. The Finance Officer serves a two-year term.

**Family Education Representative:** Shall represent the concerns of families and children to the Council. He/she shall be responsible to work with the Director to design and recommend methods by which the school may help families be more effective and become more informed as to early childhood development and education.

**Family Representative:** Shall represent the families and their views and concerns to the Council. The Family Representative shall serve on the Nominating Committee to suggest new members to join the Council for each new program year. Shall coordinate volunteer activities and organize family volunteers with Classroom Volunteer Training in the Fall, and initiate Family Coffees and evening gatherings "Parents Night Out." They shall also inform Classroom Volunteer Coordinators of upcoming Council Meetings, any special events, volunteer opportunities, and fundraising activities. They shall keep Classroom Volunteer Coordinators informed of their ongoing responsibilities throughout the year. The Family Representative serves a two-year term.

**Personnel Officer:** Shall serve as the Chair of the Nursery School Council Personnel Committee, which is comprised, with the Personnel Officer, of the Council Co-Chairpersons (or Chair and Vice Chair) and the Finance Chair. He/she shall work with the Director and the Council as regards matters pertaining to personnel. He/she will be responsible for, with the Personnel Committee, aiding the Director in developing or amending personnel policies, interviewing candidates during the hiring process, reviewing annual staff contracts, arranging for the Annual Review of the Director, which will take place by December each year, and helping to resolve any other personnel issues that may arise. The Personnel Officer will be responsible for providing an objective forum for any grievances, and for reporting all Nursery Personnel activities to the RUMC Staff/Parish Relations Committee. The Personnel Officer serves a two-year term.

**RUMC Pastor:** Shall serve on the Council ex-officio, with vote, as an advisor to the needs and concerns of both the school and the RUMC. He/she shall serve on the Council Personnel Committee.

**Secretary:** Shall be responsible for distributing notices of upcoming meetings and keeping minutes of all meetings of the Nursery School Council, including attendance records. The Secretary shall serve on the Nominating Committee.

**Teacher Representative(s):** Shall be elected from the teaching staff and represent the views and concerns of that group. The Teacher Representative will be responsible for providing a written report to all staff members of the Council's monthly meeting and activities. The Teacher Representative will take notes regarding all action items at staff meetings and provide the Council with information about how and when each action item was resolved.

**RUMC Trustee:** Shall serve as a liaison with the RUMC Board of Trustees, representing both Church and Nursery School concerns relating to the facilities maintenance and improvement. The Trustee serves a two-year term.

## **Other Volunteers of the Nursery School Council:**

**Beautification:** Works to improve the school setting by periodically checking the environment, including exterior, classrooms and playground. It includes organizing school clean up days.

**Event Planning/Fund-Raising:** A subcommittee organized by the Nursery School Council Vice Chairperson responsible for planning and organizing all fundraising activities. These include three to four fundraisers per year, such as, the Giving Tree Party and Auction (October); Harvest Fair (November); Family Party (Late Winter/Early Spring). Events are subject to change.

**Marketing:** Works with the Director to develop a marketing strategy to drive awareness of the school's programs and events to current and prospective families. The role includes development of marketing materials and content management of the school's website.

**Family Education:** Plans and organizes morning coffees, lunch, or evening dessert meetings for families centered on a discussion or lecture relating to childrearing concerns such as health and safety, discipline, child development, promoting self-esteem, child rearing skills, or appropriate educational practices. Will also recommend helpful articles and resources of interest to families that may be shared in the weekly newsletter.

**Class Parent Coordinator:** Each classroom will have one or two volunteers who will help recruit families in their class for volunteer activities; inform families of upcoming Council Meetings to gather families' input on changes in program or policies and special events or school closings; arrange for class coffees for families; assist the teachers with planning for holiday or other celebrations and coordinate class fundraising activities.

**Librarian:** Organizes and oversees class librarians (one volunteer from each classroom, who oversees going to local libraries to check out books requested by teachers each month). Also maintains the school library, school Amazon Wish List, and compiles monthly Scholastic Book Orders for all students and teachers.

**Welcome and Outreach:** Works to provide a connection between the school, community and families of FMRNS by greeting and welcoming new and inquiring families into the school community at Open House and Registration in January, in order to call new families who've been accepted into the next school term in

February, and welcoming and introducing new families to teachers and other staff and Council during Orientation in September. The Welcome and Outreach representatives may also work to plan and implement mission projects in collaboration with the church such as food and clothing drives or disseminate information about community events. Overall, they will serve to help families feel more connected to the school and community.

A list of Staff and Nursery School Council Members for the current year will be distributed at the Family Meeting in September.

As a family, your help and input are vital, and you are welcome to attend meetings of the Council. Please submit your agenda item to the Chairperson one week before the scheduled meeting. The Nursery School Council meets the first Wednesday of each month, October through May, with a special meeting scheduled at the end of summer before the opening of school.

## **Our Staff**

**Director(s):** Must fulfill all requirements as set by the State of Connecticut Day Care Licensing regulations. The Director shall be responsible for state compliance and accreditation. He/she shall be responsible for school operation in keeping with the mission and vision of RUMC and the policies and procedures set forth in this document and by the Nursery School Council. He/she shall oversee all administration and education operations and be responsible for evaluation of the school's programs and personnel. The Director shall be responsible for all PR/communication from or about the school to its various audiences including the RUMC, families, staff, community, licensing and accreditation, and professional organizations. He/she shall have budget responsibility and review of all contracts and payments. He/she shall be responsible to oversee the Bookkeeper to verify and manage financial operations of the school and its programs. The Director shall be responsible for all personnel issues, including evaluations, compensation, recruiting, training, and changes. He/she shall have responsibility for the physical plant/facilities concerns and maintenance management. The Director shall recommend capital, and program enrichment needs to aid fundraising efforts and shall work with the FMRNS Council to develop appropriate programs.

## **Our Teachers**

We take great pride in the special qualities, experience and talents of our teachers. They have a rich and extensive educational background and work experience in the field of Early Childhood Education and are known for their personal qualities of warmth, empathy, and the ability to positively to others. For each of our teachers, we have meticulously checked references and have performed thorough background checks. Our teachers are also required to complete yearly professional training courses, receive yearly training in Child Abuse/Maltreatment Identification and

Prevention, and are CPR and First Aid certified. All our staff have been fingerprinted and vetted by the State Central Registry.

Supervision of staff is the responsibility of the Director. Supervision of the Director is the responsibility of the Personnel Subcommittee of the FMRNS Council. Staff set goals annually with the Director in a private conference. The Director sets goals annually with the Nursery Council. A record of each conference is kept in each staff person's confidential file. All contracts, reviews, and personnel-related correspondence are maintained in a locked file. Staff are hired with a 90-day probationary period.

**Bookkeeper: (Paid Position)** Responsible for all deposits, payrolls, bills, IRS payments, balancing bank statements, budget.

**Office Administrator:** The balance of the staff positions which the Council deems necessary to operate the Nursery School including, but not limited to: Team Director, Head Teacher, Teacher, Assistant Teacher, Teacher's Aide, Bookkeeper, and Maintenance. These positions shall be defined in an addendum to this document and shall be detailed and maintained in keeping with local, State of Connecticut, Federal and RUMC mandated personnel policies and procedures, and are to be reviewed annually by the Nursery School Director and Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee shall propose changes to these positions for approval by the Council. Volunteer positions will also be defined in an addendum to this document.

## Funding

1. Tuition, which covers the operating budget.
2. Fund-raising, which covers capital improvements or special programs.
3. Loans from church endowment, to cover building or other capital needs.

## Licensing

Licensed by State of Connecticut, Office of Early Childhood

License Number: 12506

Federal Employer ID#: 06-1044234

NAEYC Accredited Program: #478417

## Management

The governing body is the Nursery School Council, composed of families, professional staff members and church members.

## Organization

Not-for-profit, non-denominational community outreach program of the Rowayton United Methodist Church, founded in 1987.

## Staffing

Administration, teaching, professional development, curriculum development, licensing, safety, and other regulation compliance. Member of Connecticut and NAEYC.

The Five Mile River Nursery School is owned and operated by the Rowayton United Methodist Church which is supervised by the District Superintendent and the Bishop of the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church