

Tall Spire Nursery
School Parent
Handbook



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Tall Spire Statement of Purpose

Tall Spire is convinced that what we do with children before they begin their formal education will be crucial to the rest of their lives. With a sense of wonder, a sense of humor and a sense of compassion, we offer them a child-centered environment with a teacher to child ratio of one to ten. Within the “learning center” approach, children in mixed sex and age groupings make choices to practice and master new intellectual, social, and physical skills. Uppermost, is our desire to help each child acquire an enthusiastic, positive, and confident attitude toward self, life and learning.

Tall Spire is a private non-profit educational organization which does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political belief, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or toilet training status. Toilet training is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment. We provide service to children between the ages of three (3.0) years and (5.0) years and their families. The child must be three (3.0) years by August 31st. Our educational curriculum is based on the tenets of early childhood development and is not a religious education program. Transportation is provided by the parents. Parent participation, visits (unannounced as well as announced) and input into the center policies are encouraged and welcomed. A “Back to School Night” will be held in October. A Parent/Preschooler Program will be held in May to celebrate our school year together.

Goals and Objectives

- helping children develop language and social skills through play
- provide each child opportunities to learn about and appreciate the world around Them
- provide a learning center approach where mixed ages make choices with a balance Of freedom and guidance and are allowed moving from one experience to Another
- to provide an environment in which each child can interact on his/her own level of Ability
- to develop materials to be used in a variety of ways that are **fun, stimulating** and **Success oriented!**
- approach child development with a “learn by doing” attitude
- to love and appreciate each child as an unique and special individual

State Licensing Contact Information

Tall Spire Nursery School is run by program Director, Katherine Relihan. The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care licensing agency regulates, reviews, and approves the Tall Spire license to operate. Relicensing is done every two year. A copy of the current license is posted in the school. All of the Tall Spire Nursery School Policies are available on our website as well as hard copies available in the Director’s office.

Parents may contact the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) at anytime for information regarding the programs regulatory compliance history

Early Education and Care Department

360 Merrimack Street

Lawrence, MA. 01843

1-978-681-9684 ext 307

Program Licensor: Karen Gale

Tall Spire Nursery School Organization

Center Administration

Katherine Relihan

Director

Katherine Relihan

Financial Business Manager

Steven Relihan

Teaching Staff

Monday-Wednesday-Friday

Katherine Relihan

Patty Rello

Connie Forester

Cindy McNulty

Jillian Sallee

Tuesday-Thursday

Patty Rello

Connie Forester

Shauna Galante

Kelli Learned

Amy Burd

Clerical/Admin (MWF)

Melissa Quinn

Health Care Consultant

Nancy Manfred

Tuition Policy

Your child's tuition is computed on a yearly figure divided into nine monthly payments, to be paid September through May. Payments are due the first week of school and by the first of the month thereafter. Unless you have discussed it with us, October through May payments received after the tenth of the month are considered late and are subject to a late fee of \$25.00. We ask that all payments be made by check written out to Tall Spire Nursery School Inc. We remind you that bank charges incurred by us for any returned checks will be your responsibility. As the installment payments reflect a yearly tuition, there are no deductions for absences, or for miscellaneous holidays (Columbus Day, Veterans Day, etc.) No charges are made for our full, scheduled vacation weeks in December, February and April. Please notify us at least two weeks in advance should your child need to withdraw from school. A tuition fee schedule is provided to you when you visit the school for a tour or by phone at 781-245-4098

Our Programs

Tall Spire offers a two-day program on Tuesday and Thursdays from 9am to 12pm and a three-day program on Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 9am to 12pm. Children must be 2.9 years by August 31 of that school year. An extended day for the Monday/Wednesday/Friday session is offered one Wednesday a month. The children in that session bring their peanut free lunch from home that day and stay until 1pm.

Separation Tips

Before separation

- Please arrive to school on time (9am)
 - Know, trust and feel comfortable with the school
 - Be familiar with the setting and routine
 - Leave ample time to say goodbye
 - Prepare child in advance by talking about school and what they can expect
 - Be positive in your approach to separation
- Resist the temptation to "bribe" your child for controlling or hiding their distress

Saying Goodbye

- Always say goodbye
- Establish a goodbye routine
- Leave some transition time for your child to connect with the teacher
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Be empathetic, but don't allow yourself to be manipulated

- Goodbyes need to be definite and firm
- Always tell your child that you will return
- Leave a transitional item with your child, if necessary (e.g., family picture, stuffed toy, blanket. -no bottles, food, Sippy cups or pacifiers please)

Communication with school

- Please feel free to call the school to see how your child is doing
- Communicate any special information concerning your child with his/her homeroom teacher
- Let the teacher know, in the child's presence, who will be picking up your child if it is someone other than the person bringing him/her to school. Please make sure you have that pick up person on your child's release form. We will not release a child to anyone that is not on the release form.

Saying hello again

- Greet your child upon arrival
- Acknowledge the emotional swings that accompany reunions
- Be aware and respectful of the schools "end of the day": routines making sure to let the teacher know you are taking your child)
- Be consistent with the school's pick up policy

Special Considerations

- Each child is an individual. Use these guidelines for your own situation.
- Separation is an ongoing process. Once an adjustment is made, many factors may precipitate a regression, such as, a change in the family, new baby, a move, and a divorce, a change in the parent's job status and schedule, or a new developmental stage of the child.

Parent Information, Rights and Responsibilities

Staff- All educators at Tall Spire are certified in CPR/First Aid. They all have been cleared/approved through the Background Record Check Process, which includes a CORI, DCF, SORI and Fingerprint check.

Hall Moms Every Hall Mom that will be here at Tall Spire is cleared/approved through the Background Record Check process, which includes a CORI, DCF, SORI and Fingerprint check.

Parent Visits- Parents have the right to make unannounced visits to their child's classroom as long as their child is present.

Parent Input- Parents have the right to make suggestions to teachers and the Director. This input may be in regards to the development of our programs, policies and procedures, or any other issue. The Director will decide whether or not the suggestions will be implemented.

Meeting with Parents- Parents will visit Tall Spire with their child, and meet with the Director prior to enrollment. At this time parents will be told of the Tall Spire website where they will have access to all of Tall Spire's Policies, Emergency Procedures, Parent Handbooks and general school information. Copies and handbooks of this same information are available in the Director's office as well.

Parent Conferences- parents may ask for a conference at anytime with their child's teacher and/or Director.

Progress Reports- Tall Spire provides two progress reports during the school year; an informal note in October and one formal evaluation in March. A copy will be provided to you and one copy will be placed in child's file. Program staff will bring special problems or significant developments to your attention as soon as they arise. If your child has disabilities, you will receive a written progress report every three months.

*Children's Records-*Information contained in a child's record is privileged and confidential. Tall Spire staff will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without your written consent. You will be notified if your child's record is subpoenaed.

*Access to your Child's Records-*Parents are entitled to have access to your child's record at reasonable times on request. You will have access to the record within two business days of your request unless you consent to a longer time period. You will be allowed to view your child's entire record. Tall Spire has procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of children's records, and will maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record which identifies anyone who has had access to the record or who has received any information from the record. This log is available only to the parent and the people responsible for maintaining the record.

Amending your Child's Record- parents have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to their child's record. Parents have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in their child's record. If a parent believes that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in their child's record, they have the right to a conference with the Director to make your objections known. If a parent has a conference with the Director, the Director must inform the parent in writing one week of their decision regarding your objections. If the Director decides in your favor, she must immediately take steps necessary to put the decision into effect.

*Transfer of Records-*When your child is no longer in care, Tall Spire will give the parent their child's record or any person the parent identifies, upon the parents request. A signed release of records form must be signed by the parent or other

authorized caregiver in order for the release of records. This signed form will be kept on file for 5 years.

Charge for Copies- Tall Spire will not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's records.

*Responsibilities of Parents-*Parents are responsible for reading all handouts given to them, such as; monthly newsletters, calendars, notices...etc. Parents are responsible to be aware of all policies and procedures of Tall Spire which are available on the school website www.tallspire.com . Copies are also available in the Director's office

Plan for Volunteers

Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's classroom activities, with prior notice. Parent volunteers will be under the direct supervision of an EEC qualified educator at all times.

Any other volunteer/assistant/student teacher will have to comply with EEC Background Record Check Regulations. They will receive appropriate orientation, supervision and training by the Director/Administrator or Lead Teacher.

Documentation of dates, hours of service and responsibilities will be done by the Director/Assistant Administrator or Lead Teacher. Parents would be notified prior to any volunteer, (other than a child's parent) assistant or student teacher that would be in the classroom.

Snow Day Policy

If Wakefield Public Schools cancel school due to inclement weather (snow, ice storms...) Tall Spire will be **CLOSED** as well. If Wakefield Public School calls a **delayed opening** Tall Spire will be **CLOSED**. Parents, please listen for the *no school announcements* for **Wakefield Public Schools** on your local radio/tv stations **prior** to bringing your child to school in the morning. If you have any doubts of a closing please call the Director's **cell phone** at 781-864-3210. Tall Spire does not typically make up snow days at the end of the year. If an extraordinary number of days have been missed it is the discretion of the Director of whether to extend the school year.

Birthday Celebration Policy

A child's birthday is a special event. Here at tall Spire we share in their celebration as a whole group. Each child is made to feel special on their day. Our **regular** daily snacks will be served at all birthday celebrations. No outside food will be allowed. (With the exception of children with allergies)

Parents please **no goodie bags** of any kind allowed and if party invitations are given out they must be mailed to the individual child's home address or handed to the specific parent or caregiver. Please be sensitive to our little ones hearts!

The birthday child:-will receive a special crown, a birthday buddy (small stuffed animal) and enjoy the traditional "Happy Birthday" song at *group time*.

Nutrition/Snack Plan

Tall Spire is a peanut free school. Nutritious snacks are provided each school day. A list is provided in the next section of this handbook as well as posted on the wall across from the snack preparation area. Children enrolled in the three day a week program (MWF) are offered an extended day once a month in which they are able to bring their own lunch from home and stay until 1pm. Parents will provide a nutritious lunch. A list of food suggestions for nutritious lunches is available in the Director's office. Keeping safety in mind, parents are asked **not** to include the following items in your child's lunch; grapes, popcorn, hot dogs, hard candy, chewing gum and any other choking types of foods. This lunch must be peanut and tree nut free. Parents are encouraged to read food labels to make sure that the product is **not** processed in a plant that manufactures peanuts.

Children with Food Allergies

If a child has a food allergy, the parent may send a snack with their child each school day. This snack must be labeled with the child's name and homeroom teacher's name on it. It must be left at the snack station (no food is allowed in a child's backpack or cubby). For any child that has specific allergies, **a snack list permission slip** must be signed by the child's parent. This permission slip will be kept in a folder on the snack station for staff members and Hall Moms to check as necessary. A list of all food allergies is posted at the snack station.

Each teacher at Tall Spire has received USDA Nutrition Training for the healthy growth and development of children and has annual CPR training in food choking hazards. Snack time is always supervised and each child is encouraged to eat in a leisurely rate and given adequate amounts of food. Children are actively involved in planning snack menus and encouraged to make suggestions for different snack ideas. Snack time is treated as a learning opportunity which offers children a chance to have meaningful conversations, develop good listening skills, and appropriate table manners. Children have the opportunity to practice many self help skills such as; pouring, passing out appropriate number of napkins/cups, and cleaning up after themselves. Once a child is finished with their snack they are offered an appropriate transition activity(books, puzzles...) while waiting for others to finish eating before moving on to "Group Time".

Snack List (provided by Tall Spire)

Apples
Applesauce (occasionally)
Bananas
Cheerios
Graham Crackers
Jelly
Oranges
Poland Spring water
Pretzels
Raisins
Ritz Crackers

Transition Policy

Each child is assigned a “Homeroom” teacher and classroom space at the beginning of the school year. This assignment is for the entire school year from September through June (unless extreme circumstances arise and a change would be in the best interest of the class. A discussion between the child’s parent and the Director would take place prior to making this decision). Tall Spire does not change “Homeroom” assignments due to an age change during the school year.

Tall Spire does incorporate a *center time* into our school day. Children have the opportunity to choose one of five *centers* offered each day. Teachers remain in their original classrooms which at this part of the day becomes *center time*. The five center choices are; **Dramatic Play, Game Room, Lab, Art and Music**.

Homeroom teachers keep track of the child’s choices throughout the school year to ensure they are participating in all of the centers. During homeroom time the children will choose which center they will go to by placing their symbol on the planning board on the particular choice of center. This is documented in a *center time attendance book* which will be in every center. The teacher then is able to check this list with the children that come into the center. In case of a fire drill or evacuation during center time, the teacher will take this book to make sure all the children are accounted for in her center and then proceed to an exit and follow evacuation procedures.* See Emergency/Evacuation procedures under the Health Care Policy.

Field Trip Policy

Tall Spire Nursery School does not take any field trips that require transportation. Only walking field trips are taken. Parents are given a blanket release form upon enrollment giving permission for walking field trips. Parents are notified of any unscheduled walking trips and permission slips will be signed at that time. On such walking field trips, Teachers/Director/Administrative Assistant or Hall Moms will bring along the following: *Emergency for Evacuation Book* (which contains all emergency phone numbers and contacts for the children) and a backpack with a travel first aid kit, emergency items and any Epi-Pens which are needed.

Termination and Suspension Policy

Every effort will be made to have a child remain in the school until the end of the program year when possible. If after identifying the problem, documenting, conferencing, servicing, etc., termination may take place in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

Circumstances under which a child may need to leave the program include but are not limited to;

- *Parental Choice*
 - moving, financial considerations, or dissatisfaction with the program
- *Inappropriateness of the program for the child*
 - The schedule or the program are not a good match for the child
 - The child needs more hours than is available
- *Parental ability or unwillingness to conform to program, policies, and practices*
 - Failure to provide updated medical information
 - Behind two months or more in the tuition payment
 - Unwillingness to obtain needed services for the child
- *Safety of the other children in the program*
 - Chronic biting or aggressive behavior

If there is an immediate concern of risk to others or to the child, suspension may occur immediately until safety issues are resolved to the Director's satisfaction.

The goal of our staff at Tall Spire is to always provide children with support, teach them skills to build self-control and keep all of the children in the program safe. A Meeting with the child's parents regarding the reasons of possible termination will be held. Every attempt will be made to resolve the issues and to avoid suspension and termination. The Director will offer referral information to parents for evaluations, diagnostic or therapeutic services. A plan for behavioral intervention at home and the program will be discussed as well as options for supportive services to the program including consultation and educator training. All such attempts will

be documented. If termination becomes necessary, parents will receive this information in writing stating the reasons.

The child and his/her parents shall be given a minimum of two weeks in order to prepare for termination. Parents will be encouraged to have the child attend school to say goodbye in the event termination is the choice of the parent. Appropriate books and curriculum will be used to help prepare the child in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand. The emphasis will be that the reason for leaving the program is NOT the child's fault. We will try to provide ways to continue some contact with the parent and child. Whenever it is possible the family will be encouraged to re-enroll the child when circumstances change. The family and child will be treated with dignity and respect during the process.

Children with Disabilities

Tall Spire will admit children with disabilities and make reasonable accommodations to welcome or continue to serve any child with a disability. In determining whether accommodations are reasonable and necessary, the program Director must, with parental consent and as appropriate, request information about the child from the Local Education Agency (LEA), Early Intervention Program or other health or service providers. Based upon available information the Director with the parent's input, would identify in writing the specific accommodations, if any, required to meet the needs of the child at the program, including but not limited to; any change or modification in the child's participation in regular program activities, the size of the group to which the child may be assigned and the appropriate staff/child ration and any special equipment, materials, ramps, or aids needed to serve the child. If any of these accommodations cause an undue financial burden to the school, such as but not limited to; the cost and nature of the accommodations, ability to secure funding or services, the overall financial resources of the program, the number of staff members employed, the effect on expenses and resources or the impact otherwise of such action upon the program; whether the required accommodations alters the fundamental nature of the program (the accommodations related to the toileting needs of a child with a disability who is not trained must not be considered an undue burden) then the program Director must provide the parent written notification within 30 days of the receipt of this information, that the accommodations required are not reasonable or would cause an undue burden to the program. This notification must include the reasons for the decision, notification to the parent(s) that they may request that the Department review the programs decision and determine if the program licensee is in compliance with 102 CMR 1.03(1) and 606 CMR 7.04(13). The Director must maintain a copy of this notification in its records.

Transportation Plan

Tall Spire Nursery School does not provide transportation. Transportation is the responsibility of the child's parent. The parents and adult caregivers are accountable when providing transportation of children from home to school and from school to home. The children must be restrained in an approved car seat in accordance with the Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law signed into effect on July 10, 2008. Parking is available in the church parking lot as well as on Lafayette Street and Main Street. Please do not park in the handicap spaces. Adults are asked to drive cautiously in the immediate area of the church. Adults walking with children into the school must hold hands or walk in a chain like fashion until they approach the entrance door. PARENTS/CAREGIVERS: ***please do not leave any child unattended in a car.***

No form of transportation is used on any field trips. Tall Spire only participates in walking field trips.

*The First Baptist Church has asked us to inform parents that children are NOT allowed to play on the grassy areas next to and in front of the church. This is **church grounds only** and not part of Tall Spire Nursery School.

Arrival and Departure Procedure

The doors to the classroom areas open at 9:00am. Parents/Caregivers are to help their children hang their coats up and then accompany them directly into their homeroom class to greet their teacher. Make sure you ***always*** say goodbye to your child and let them know you will be back at the end of the school day.

The doors to the classroom areas will open at noon for dismissal.

Parents/Caregivers proceed into their child's homeroom class to greet them.

Parents/Caregivers ***MUST*** inform the child's homeroom teacher that you have your child and are leaving. No child will be released to a minor, such as an older sibling. If anyone other than the parent or caregiver is picking the child up, the school must be notified in the morning of the change and if that person is NOT on the child's release form, a written note from the parent must be given to the teacher or Director prior to dismissal. We cannot take a verbal request over the phone for a non authorized person to pick up the child. If a note has not been written and given to the teacher or Director, we will not release the child to that person at dismissal time. A call will be made to the parents or other adult that ***IS*** listed on the release form. Please keep this in mind when filling out the initial release form. Parents may put as many names on that list as needed. Any additions or changes to this list can

be made by the parent during the school year. The Director will file these written additions or changes in the child's folder.

Referral Services Plan

The Director has the responsibility for the implementation of this written plan. When an educator has a concern regarding the development and or behavior of a child, all educators will be notified of this concern and will proceed to observe the child for a period of one to two weeks. These observations will be documented by the child's homeroom teacher and discussed with the Director as well as all other teachers that have had an opportunity to observe the child in their assigned "Centers". All educators will have input into the discussion concerning the observed child at the next regularly scheduled staff meeting or earlier if necessary.

If the Director determines action should be taken, the child's homeroom teacher will be asked to set up a conference to include the child's parents, Director, and homeroom teacher. All parties will have input into services needed and any classroom modifications. The homeroom teacher has the responsibility to document recommendations, concerns and any action to be taken.

Recommendations are maintained in the child's folder unless the parent requests, in writing they be released to the parent.

If the parent pursues an evaluation, either by the local school system or from a private source, the Director will request copies of these evaluations and place them in the child's folder. These results will be used to design an educational plan to meet the child's needs while a student at Tall Spire Nursery School.

If the Director makes a referral, she will obtain written consent from the parent prior to making the referral. The Director will review the child's progress every three months to determine if another referral is necessary.

The Director will refer parents to other agencies for appropriate social, mental health, and medical service if the staff or parents feel that such additional services would benefit the child.

Behavior Management/Child Guidance Plan

Educators will facilitate the development of self control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity and setting limits.

The educator will involve the children in setting clear and consistent limits for behavior, as appropriate to their ages. Limits will be presented as positive aides to a comfortable and supportive social environment. Educator's expectations should match and respect children's developing capabilities. The program schedule is created in a way that prepares the child for unhurried transitions from one activity to another. The child has adequate time to finish what they are involved with and in turn helps to create a more positive transition. Children are encouraged and praised for their cooperation.

Children are provided many opportunities to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping, negotiating and talking with the person involved to solve any behavior problems. The educator must validate the child's feelings and show them appropriate ways of expressing them. Use of a "feelings chart" may help the child communicate his/her feelings. Educators will facilitate the development of these positive social skills at all times.

Educators accept that there is often more than one right answer. They recognize that children learn from self directed problem solving and experimentation. A child shall be rewarded for positive behaviors, which may include a simple acknowledgement and praise, a hug, a sticker or special privileges such as helping the teacher with various classroom jobs.

If one child hurts another, **both** children need immediate attention. The behavior (not the child) should be addressed. There are no "bad" children. Using "I" feelings are encouraged: for example, "I feel sad when you...I feel disappointed when you..."

If every attempt has been made to ignore, or redirect the child's negative behavior and the child is still very upset, the Educator may remove the child from the group to a quieter area where they are offered a calming activity such as; a book, puzzle, paper and crayons to help them regain their self control. This quiet time would always take place within a teacher's view. If the child refuses the offered activities, he/she may just sit at the table or rug area. This time would not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age. Every effort will be made to comfort and console an unhappy, tearful, hurt or withdrawn child.

The child's homeroom teacher or Director may involve the parents in helping to address negative behaviors, including consideration of referral for a variety of social, medical or mental health services, when appropriate.

In addition;

- No child shall be subjected to any cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, embarrassment or verbal abuse
- Corporal punishment, including spanking will ***never*** be used.
- No child shall be denied food as a punishment

- No child will be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet
- No child will be confined to an area or piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision

Evacuation Plan

Refer to *Evacuation Plan*

Emergency Procedures

Refer to *Health Care Policy Plan*

Health Care Policy

Please refer to the *Health Care Policy* for the following information and Policies:

Abuse/Neglect

Diapering/Toileting

Emergency Procedures

Evacuation Procedure

Individual Health Care Needs

Infection Control

Infectious Disease

Injury Prevention

Medication Policy

Mildly Ill Children