



Purpose School Parent Handbook 2025 – 2026

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First Congregational Church

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Stoneham, MA 02180

Important Dates: 2025–2026

August 26, 27 & 28	Teacher Set-up Day
September 2	Visiting Day
September 3	First Day of School
October 13	Columbus Day Holiday
October 30 & 31	Halloween Celebration
November 6 & 7	School Picture Days
November 11	Veterans' Day Holiday
November 26	School closes at Noon
November 27 & 28	Thanksgiving Holidays
December 20	School closes at Noon
Dec. 22–Jan.2	Holiday Vacation
January 19	MLK Holiday
January 29 & 30	Conferences, No School
February 16–20	February Vacation
April 20–24	April Vacation
May 25	Memorial Day Holiday
June 9	Last Day of School
June 10	Discovery and Sunroom graduation



2025–2026 Monthly Tuition Rates

(Tuition is based on 10 equal monthly payments)

3-and-1/2-Hour Core Session

Two Day	\$341/month
Three Day	\$468/month
Four Day	\$626/month
Five Day	\$723/month

8:30–12:00

School with Lunch Bunch

Two Day	\$404/month
Three Day	\$562/month
Four Day	\$753/month
Five Day	\$871/month

8:30–1:00

Note: We offer a 5% discount for a second child's core tuition. We also offer a la carte rates if your child attends Lunch Bunch or Extended Session for fewer days than they attend school. Please ask us about these rates or see the information on our website.

A \$15 late fee will be charged if tuition is not received by the 15th of the month.

5/1/2025- update

This handbook outlines Purpose School policies and procedures as they exist under normal Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations. EEC is our licensing body and as such dictates the minimum standard by which we must operate. Under certain circumstances, such as a State mandate, EEC, or Stoneham Department of Public Health may release temporary regulations which require Massachusetts child care providers, including Purpose School, to make temporary or permanent changes to policies and procedures. Permanent changes will be updated in the Parent Handbook. Temporary changes to policies and procedures will be outlined in a separate document which will be emailed to families.

Tuition Information

1. The Parent will pay Purpose School for the Child's education/care at the monthly tuition rate set forth at the beginning of the year. If the parent requests a change to the Child's attendance schedule, the School Director will calculate a new tuition rate. Tuition is due the first week of each month. Payment is to be handed to the teacher or placed in the mail slot at door #1. **A late fee of \$15.00 will be added to any payment that is more than two weeks past due. We strongly suggest enrolling in the Tuition Payment Plan to pay tuition via ACH will eliminate the possibility of late payments.**
2. The Parent is responsible for monthly tuition regardless of the child's absence for any reason including school closings due to holidays, building emergencies, inclement weather, State of Emergency called in MA, closing mandated by the Town of Stoneham, or the child's illness. A schedule of the school's planned closings is distributed annually. Yearly tuition is divided into ten equal payments that are due at the beginning of each month. At any time, parents can give a 30-day notice and withdraw their child, and then tuition payments would stop and your child's placement ends.
3. Continual failure to pay tuition may result in the suspension of the child's enrollment until tuition is caught up or a payment plan has been agreed upon by the Parent and School Director. If a check is returned for insufficient funds, Purpose School will request a second check along with a \$25.00 bank fee. If the second check does not clear, the Parent will be asked to pay the amount with cash or money order.
4. The Parent will give the Director of Purpose School at least a 30-day written notice before withdrawing or reducing the number of school days a child attends. The Parent will pay tuition for school until the end of the 30-day notice period.
5. The Parent agrees to **drop off and pick up** the child within the set school hours. Chronic late pick-up may result in the termination of the child's enrollment or a late fee.

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Welcome

We welcome all children at Purpose School. We accept children without bias who are two years nine months to six years old. Typically, students are from Stoneham, Wakefield, Melrose, Reading, Medford, Woburn, and Winchester.

Philosophy, Goals, Objectives

The Purpose School provides a safe, nurturing, enriching environment for young children. Our developmentally appropriate curriculum and theme-based activities are designed to foster growth in the areas of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. At Purpose School, children are encouraged to learn through child-centered participatory play.

Our curriculum offers a balance between planned teacher-initiated activities and planned free choice activities set up daily in the classroom environment. The teacher serves as a resource by preparing an environment that is conducive to learning. Children are encouraged to experiment and are given a choice of materials that will expand their thinking and instill confidence in their level of competence.

The teacher helps the children define the limits of their behavior and guides them in forming their interpersonal and group skills. Through a widely-integrated curriculum, children will learn to work comfortably in both group and individual settings. Each child is recognized as individually unique. Children are treated at all times with dignity and respect. The learning environment is designed with special equipment and materials to allow each child to:

- Develop a sense of security and feelings of positive self-esteem
- Develop attention span and ability to follow through on a task
- Develop a range of motor skills (fine and gross)
- Develop and enhance language skills and literacy
- Develop readiness skills for math, science, reading, etc.
- Interact with children and adults
- Learn about and explore their emerging world and the world of others
- Engage in self-expression through music, dance, dramatic play, and art
- Develop pro-social body control and social skills
- Develop self-help skills that are needed to be successful and independent
- Supporting problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, and relationship building



Statement of Non-Discrimination

Purpose School is sponsored by the First Congregational Church in Stoneham and was established in 1943 as a community service. We do not discriminate in providing services to children and their families based on race, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, disabilities, or any other category protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. All children are welcome! Our program is designed for children 2.9 years through 6 years old.

Extended Day Lunch Option

This program begins on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, and lasts until Tuesday, June 9, 2026. Those enrolled will bring a ready-to-eat lunch (labeled with the child's name) to school and remain at school until 1:00 pm. Children will engage in a variety of additional games and activities. A few times each month we will order pizza (a small additional charge) for interested families.

To ensure the safety of all our students we must remind you that the Purpose School is a nut-free program. Parents must refrain from packing lunches that contain peanut butter and/or other products that contain nuts. Please note that even if a product states "made in a factory with nuts" it cannot be served at Purpose.

We feel many great social, emotional, and self-help skills are learned when staying and independently eating their lunch with their peers. We strongly recommend that every student stay at least a few times before graduation to prepare for kindergarten. You can add it at any time as a drop-in fee or add lunch to your planned daily schedule.

Lunches should include:

- A freezer pack to keep food cold
- A thermos to keep foods warm (Soup, noodles, chicken nuggets, etc.)
- A drink: milk, water, or 100% juice
- Nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables, and dairy products
- Ready to serve foods
- Remember "table ready" means cut into bite-size pieces
- Please make sure you provide some protein to help with energy levels



Snack Time

Parents should provide a healthy snack and drink (water bottle or juice box) each day. The snack should be placed in a separate bag and put in the child's backpack. Supplemental snacks may occur due to holiday and/or birthday celebrations and classroom cooking projects. Parents must first check with their child's teacher before bringing in any food items to the classroom. We have an approved list of food items that may be served. We do not allow any homemade baked goods into the school due to the concern of cross-contamination. Please inform Purpose School of any food-related allergies. Notices of food allergies are posted and available to staff for review in each classroom. Special precautions will be made for those children who have been diagnosed with allergies. Reminder: Nut Free snacks and lunches!

Admission & Registration

All parents considering the Purpose School are invited to visit before enrollment. Tours can be scheduled in October, November, and December by calling the Director, Kristie Colwell. We strongly suggest that the parents take the first tour and meet with the Director without children so the adults can talk freely about the preschool experience. Children will visit with their parents for their tour and to meet their teachers right before school starts in September. After parents have visited, if interested, they will be given a pre-enrollment form to complete. These forms can be returned to school on Tuesday, January 5, 2026.

Once we offer a placement, and the parent accepts, a \$75 registration fee is due. Those students who do not receive a placement will be put on a waitlist. It is important to remember that if your child is not placed by December 2025, you must reapply in January 2026 for the 2025-2026 school year.

Currently enrolled students will receive pre-enrollment forms in November and be given first placement priority. Unfortunately, this priority cannot always guarantee the first choice due to limited class sizes. For this reason, all parents are encouraged to include a second-choice session and submit the form and fee to the office by Nov. 24, 2025.



Siblings of currently enrolled students receive second placement priority. Children are placed according to age and class size. Confirmation of placement will be sent by December for the upcoming school year. A first-choice waitlist will be maintained for all enrolled students who are placed in second-choice sessions.

We strongly suggest that all Pre-K students attend at least three days to prepare for Kindergarten.

Enrollment Forms

On May 23, 2025, all fully completed ENROLL- MENT packets are due to the office. Completed packets must contain fact sheets, authorization and consent forms, allergy forms, enrollment agreements, developmental history, and medical forms (explained below). If enrolling after the May 23rd deadline, these forms can be mailed to Purpose School or dropped off at the Church office. The phone number for the Church office is (781) 438-0097 please call to see if anyone is working that day if you need to pick up or drop off.

During the summer months, please use the blue church door (door #1) to the left of the Purpose School door (door #2). The Church/School office also has an **outdoor mail slot to the left of the blue doors.**

Medical Forms

A medical form is provided by the school and must be completed by your child's doctor. Some pediatricians prefer to provide computer-generated printouts. This is acceptable as long as it contains the date of the last yearly physical, a full record of immunizations including Varicella, lead screening date and results, and a doctor's official stamp or signature. The Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) requires a complete physical each year.

Please note that health exam forms must be updated every year since it is valid for only one year from the date of the physical. For example, if your child's health exam date is November 10, 2022, then we need updated forms by November 10, 2023. Please submit or fax an updated health form immediately following the exam. During the summer, please mail in or fax new physical forms, as this will help your first-day check-in to go more quickly and smoothly.

Please Note: No child will be able to attend school without his/her completed health form and enrollment packet on file. We strongly encourage every student to get their yearly flu shot.

Curriculum

Purpose School follows the state standards and criteria as set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Education. These standards and criteria can be found in the state's "Guidelines for Preschool Learning" booklet. They are part of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, ensuring the continuity of curriculum from preschool into kindergarten and the public school system.

Daily Schedules

- Arrival
- Learning Center
- Activity Period
- Sensory Activity
- Clean-Up
- Morning Meeting / Circle Time-Literature, Music, Theme Topics
- Snack Time
- Gross Motor Activities- indoors/outdoors
- Individual Group Activities
- Lunch Time
- Quiet Activities Time
- Students who extend their school day will engage in additional activities similar to the ones listed above both indoor and outdoor.
- Dismissal Time



Transitions between activities are planned and organized to avoid children waiting. Warnings (visual, verbal, and auditory) are always given before their occurrence. Depending on class size and activity the whole group is not always expected to move at the same moment.

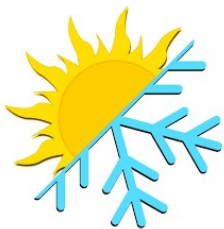
Arrival, Dismissal & Attendance

We request that all families have their children use the bathroom and wash their hands right before coming to school in the morning. Upon arrival, parent(s) check-in with the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher and the Director keeps a daily checklist with a specific time of arrival and departure on a clipboard. This checklist, printed from our enrollment database, includes the child's name, date, session, and classroom assignment. Once checked in by the parent, the child proceeds with the teacher into the school. The classroom teacher takes classroom attendance upon arrival, as well. At 9:00 am, 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm the greeting teacher confirms numbers in each classroom with a master list and posts the number, by classroom on the whiteboard in the main hallway. Purpose School entrance doors as well as all the doors around the building are always locked throughout the school day. Excessive tardiness at pick up could result in a late fee or suspension if continued without support from the child's parents.

Parents return to greeting the teacher to check child the off-master list, as they are dismissed. Teachers, who receive yearly training on dismissal policy, will ask for a picture I.D. for cross-reference on the Emergency Release record when and if an unknown adult comes for a child. Written notice of a parent carpool plan is maintained in the child's school file. Director is summoned immediately if any situation may pose risk to a child, including the appropriateness of one's physical condition to care for a child (i.e. apparent intoxication or debilitating illness). Director will call the parent or guardian immediately for consultation, as necessary, to ensure the safety of a child leaving the premises.

Weather

The Purpose School will be closed on the days that Stoneham Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather conditions. We will follow the Stoneham Public School delay system.



Example: If the Stoneham Public delays one hour we will open at 9:00 am, a two-hour delay we will open at 10:00. If you hear/see Stoneham Public School is closed, you know that Purpose School and the office are closed. In the unlikely event (i.e. no heat) that the public is open and we must close, Room Parents/Staff will contact class members before the session via email or Class DoJo.

Families can also go onto Channel 5's website and sign up to receive a school closing or delay email directly to your home. Sign up for "Purpose School" school closing alerts. Purpose School does not make up any snow days!

Transition to School / Separation Policy

Attendance in preschool, while beneficial, may manifest some separation anxiety in young children. To support your child's smooth transition to school, Purpose School has developed the following procedure:

Before pre-enrollment, parents are invited to visit Purpose School for a tour.

Teachers will read pre-enrollment packets concentrating on Developmental History to familiarize themselves with the children enrolled in their classes. They will also read past evaluations and all pertinent information enclosed in the file. A few days before school opens, children and parents will attend "visiting day."

On the first day of school, the parent(s) check-in with the classroom teacher at their assigned entrance door. From experience we have found that children who experience separation issues are often more anxious when separation is delayed and parents linger. For this reason, we recommend that parents hug their children and ensure him/her that they will come back when school is over. Feel free to call the office after at least 30 minutes to see how things are going. Every child is given all the support, comfort, and understanding that is needed by teachers throughout the transition process.

The teacher and Director will monitor children's transitional progress. For a few children, prolonged anxiety may be an indication of a child's developmental non-readiness for preschool school. The Director will consult with parents within the first few weeks of school if needed.

At the end of the school year, all students will visit their new classrooms and meet their new teachers for September. In many cases, the children are familiar with their "new" teachers as we often get together throughout the year for activities. On the last day of school, the children who are going onto kindergarten participate in a graduation ceremony.

Supervision / Staff Development

Purpose School is committed to an active supervision model. The Director will make daily drop-in visits to classrooms to observe teachers' activities and general teaching practice. Supervision sessions as a team or individually will be set up as needed to address any issue that may affect the quality of the child's experience at Purpose School. The Director will conduct a formal observation and teacher evaluation each year; this also includes a self-evaluation by each teacher. A one-to-one supervisory session will be held to discuss such evaluation. The Director will meet with the team monthly to assist with curriculum development and discuss program operations.

Yearly staff training and development is arranged by the Director and includes participation in many different types of educational workshops (diverse learners, literacy, math, music, science, and social studies, as well as First Aid Training and CPR Training and certification). Staff development also includes the visitation of other programs for observation.

Field Trips

We ask that you sign a permission form for nature walks, trips to the police and fire stations, library, post office, bank, playground, and other locations within walking distance of Purpose School.

We use the new playground across the street in the back of the Town Hall (Munchkin Park). We use a rope with loops for the children to hold as we walk together as a class. The children also wear bright orange vests whenever we leave the building.

Teachers always take the classroom emergency bag whenever the students leave the classroom as well as emergency phone and first aid supplies. The emergency bag contains phone numbers for all the students. We use two-way radios and/or cell phones to communicate between the park and the school.

Transportation

General Transportation - All children must be transported to and from the school by a parent, guardian, or another authorized person. At arrival and departure times, an adult must escort children to the assigned school entrance door. Children cannot be released to siblings for safety reasons.

Field Trip Transportation - Throughout the school year, a variety of walking field trips around the school neighborhood will be planned.

Emergency Transportation - In the event of a medical emergency, children will be transported by ambulance to Winchester Hospital or the nearest hospital designated by ambulance personnel.



Dismissal/Pick up Contacts

Calls/emails to the office regarding the change in "Pick up Person" will be checked by a return call to the parent before the release of the child. A qualified staff person will supervise children that are waiting for pick up.

Parking—Drop off and Pick up

Parents are asked to park legally in any parking space located around the school. There are three town lots; one is next to the town common, the second is located next to Town Hall, and the last is behind the Town Hall by the playground. When the funeral cones are out on Common Street, we can still use the street for quick drop off and pick up.

Only Park in the handicapped spots if authorized to do so, and do not block the crosswalks at any time!

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days for young children. We celebrate the child's special day during snack time. Parents are welcome to send in a special snack to be shared with classmates. Teachers will provide parents with a list of approved nut-free store-bought snacks. Only items in their original packaging on this list can be served at Purpose School. Parents are required to schedule this special treat ahead of time with classroom teachers. No homemade treats can be brought into school due to the concerns of cross-contamination. "Goodie Bags" are no longer allowed for the same reason. If you would like you could donate a special Birthday book to the classroom that the teacher will read that day to the class.

School Pictures

A professional photographer comes in, usually in the fall (November), to take individual and class pictures for a nominal fee. We may also take pictures to accompany an article in the local newspaper and we continuously take pictures for our portfolio style end-of-the-year evaluation. Before graduation we also have a professional photographer come in and take a picture in a cap and gown. The teacher will use their cell phones, cameras, and school tablets to take the pictures that we use in school and for your end-of-the-year personal portfolio. Daily pictures are also taken in the classroom and posted for parents on our private Facebook Page and Class DoJo.

Toys

Our classrooms are rich with educational toys and equipment. We discourage the practice of children bringing toys from home. Children can be distracted from program activity and become overly concerned with a "home toy". Often, children are conflicted by the need to share a toy brought from home. Our "home toys stay at home" policy helps to eliminate this potential conflict. However, on occasion, children may be asked by teachers to bring in an item related to our curriculum (i.e. something red for Red Day). Children will also be redirected from pretend "gunplay" while at school.



Toileting Policy

For those children who are not toilet trained, Purpose School recommends that the child wear “pull-ups” to school.

All children are required to have a labeled extra set of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear in their backpack. The school also has extra clothes for all seasons available as a backup if needed. The teacher will change children who have soiled or wet during school attendance in the children’s bathroom. This teacher will practice Universal Health Precautions while changing children’s clothing. A commercial disposable diaper cleaning cloth will be used to ensure the child’s health and comfort. While changing the child the support teacher will close the door leaving a 2-inch opening. Wet clothing, including all body fluids, will be stored in a tied plastic bag and labeled with the child’s name. Parents will be informed of the changes by the teacher upon arrival at school at dismissal.

Children are encouraged to visit the bathroom as needed and also before snack and outside time. No child is ever punished for soiling or wetting. All children will wash their hands following a bathroom visit with a commercial soap. Support teachers will also wash hands immediately after assisting a child with a bathroom visit.

Purpose School views the child’s toileting needs as a natural part of the child’s daily functioning at preschool. Children will at all times be handled with dignity, respect, and support, as is the general philosophy at Purpose School. It is a goal to have all students become toilet trained soon after starting school if they are not already done with this important process. Until your child is trained, we require you to provide us with wipes and diapers

Dress

We ask that you have your child dress in play clothes and rubber-soled shoes or sneakers. Children cannot participate safely in school activities wearing, for example, slippery leather-soled shoes or sandals. Please **label all clothing** (e.g. hats, mittens, sweaters, jackets, boots, etc.). Please apply sunscreen to your child every morning that they attend school.

A change of seasonal clothing, including underwear and socks, should be brought to school in a zip lock bag labeled with the child’s name. This bag should be brought back and forth to school daily in the child’s backpack.

For safety reasons, parents are required to remove all drawstrings from children’s clothing. These strings can get caught on equipment (i.e. slides) and cause injury.

The Sunroom and the Discovery Room request that all students have a backpack that the children can use to transport items to and from school. Learning to be responsible for this backpack is a very important pre-kindergarten activity.

Child's School Records

All records (health, evaluations, and testing both Purpose School or if needed outside resources) are confidential and accessible to parents within 24 hours upon request. Parents' rights include the deletion of any information on the child's record. The child's record will be forwarded to the Public School if requested in writing by the parent. Purpose School will also provide parents with free copies upon request.

Conferences/Communication

In October each classroom will have a scheduled day for parents to have a quick check-in meeting with the teacher. At this meeting, we will together share how the adjustment to school is going based on information from home and school. We might set some goals or suggestions that will help reach the best adjustment. A "check back" conference can be set a few weeks later if requested by the teacher or the parent.

Written reports of your child's progress will be provided twice each year, once at the end of January and again at the end of May. We use a developmental assessment tool, as recommended by the Department of Early Education and Care. Children with diagnosed disabilities will receive the third report and/or parent-teacher meeting in March.

This year parent-teacher conferences will be held on January 29 and January 30 from 8:00 am to 2:30 pm. On these two days, the school will be closed for regular sessions. Parents will schedule a conference time before these dates. These conferences are for parents only, please make sure you arrange childcare for your student during this meeting.

It is important to note that at any time during the school year a conference can be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time if the need arises. Teachers or parents can call or email each other to request a check-in meeting or conference call.

Because some parents are not able to pick up or drop off their children at school, we have a few recommendations to help improve home/school communication. Please read your monthly newsletter and calendar for important dates, and review daily Class Dojo to see pictures of the day's activities. Call, email, or Class Dojo when you have a question or concern. Because we are actively engaged and teaching our students during classroom time, we do not have "downtime" for personal daily notes. We would however be happy to quickly come to the phone when a question or concern does arise.

Monthly Newsletters

An informational newsletter is sent out monthly by email. Updates on curriculum, program plans, and special events are included. Some traditional special events include Halloween Costume Parade (Oct), Pajama Day (Dec), and Spring Show (May). Please make sure that we always have a current email address for emailing these informational newsletters. Printed copies of the newsletter can also be obtained by request.

Referrals and Reports

The teacher's observations of each child's development are written and compiled on an ongoing basis. Observations may consist of such methods as anecdotal records, small group and large group observations, and dated samples of child's work. A report on the child's progress will be prepared twice a year during January and the end of May. Copies will be given to the child's parents and placed in the child's file.

For children with disabilities, these reports will be prepared every three months; January, March, and the end of May. Time will be made available for parent/teacher conferences during the early morning or after school, as requested by parents.

Referral Services

If Purpose School staff feel that an assessment for additional social, mental health, educational, and/or medical services (including, but not limited to; dental check-up, vision, or hearing screening) would benefit a child, parents will be referred to appropriate agencies. The procedure for making such a referral includes observation of the child, written reports/observations for the child's file, meeting with the parent, suggesting referral agencies, and follow-up. A detailed written plan for referral services is available to parents upon their request.

Referral Procedure

When it is time to suggest a referral, the procedure is as follows:

1. Written description/observations of the child's problem are prepared.
2. A meeting is scheduled with the parent(s) for their input, and involvement and to recommend a referral for consultation and/or professional evaluation for the child. At this meeting, the teacher/ Director will provide to the parent the reasons for recommending a referral for additional services, a summary school's observations related to the referral, and any efforts the school may have made to accommodate the child's needs. The Director will offer assistance to the parent(s) in making the referral in terms of calling or writing. The parents will be notified of their rights under Chapter 766 in the education reform bill.
3. Each referral will be followed up to determine how effectively the child's needs are being met, and what additional services may be needed. A written record of requests or referrals will be kept in each child's folder.
4. Every three months a progress report will be prepared to determine if another referral is necessary or if the child is still in need of services. With the written consent of the parents, the school will contact the referral agency.
5. The Director will keep on hand an updated list of referral agencies.

Children with Special Needs

Children with some special needs are admitted on the same basis as to all other children. The Director shall meet with parents beforehand to tour the school, give parents information about the school, and discuss the individual needs of the child to ensure that Purpose School is a good placement for the student.

We will support families who need to work with the Public School to see about screening or placement. If an educational plan is in place it must identify in writing any accommodations that need to be taken to meet the individual needs of the child. At times Purpose School will refer the family to a different school if we are not able to safely meet all the student's requirements. If the Public School is able to offer a placement due to special educational needs, we will help you transition your child to that school. The Purpose School can meet some basic educational recommendations, but a child that requires a full educational plan will be requested to then join the public school who wrote the IEP for the child.

Additional Referrals

If Purpose School staff feel that an assessment for additional social, mental health, educational, and/or medical services (including, but not limited to; dental check-up, vision, or hearing screening) would benefit a child, parents will be referred to appropriate agencies. The procedure for making such a referral includes observation of the child, written reports/observations for the child's file, meeting with the parent, suggesting referral agencies, and follow-up. A detailed written plan for referral services is available to parents upon their request.

Children's Enrichment Fund

At the beginning of the year, we ask each family to donate \$20 to jump start our funds for our enrichment programs.

A few times each year parents are encouraged to participate in fundraising events by making donations and selling raffle tickets for a 50-50 cash split raffle. These funds are then used to sponsor enrichment activities.

We also have a sale of tee shirts and sweatshirts with the school logo.

Enrichments include: creative movement, music programs, storytellers and fitness programs.

Parent Involvement and Roles

Home/School Activities

Home/school fun activities that families can participate in are as follows:

Halloween Parade (during school hours).

November project-decorating family Turkeys.

December project- sharing family traditions.

Spring Show Concert (during school hours).



Parent Program Evaluation

A program evaluation form will be sent home twice a year during January and at the end of May to provide feedback to the school Director. All suggestions and feedback are greatly appreciated. The school committee then reviews these confidential evaluations.

Consultation

The School Director is available to meet with parents to offer support with parenting issues such as behavior management and/or concerns regarding child development. The teaching team is also available to meet with parents to support their child and family while at Purpose School.

Parent Open House

A parent Open House is held one evening each September to view the classrooms, meet the teachers, review the curriculum and socialize with other parents. Teachers will share information with families about classroom rules, expectations, and routines. The purpose of this evening is for parents to visit their child's classroom, talk with teachers and other parents and learn more about our hands-on developmentally appropriate curriculum. It is a time for teacher presentations and questions regarding the program. Due to the nature of the night's activities, it is appropriate for parents only.

Room Parents

Every classroom, at the beginning of each year, asks for one or two volunteers (depending on class size) to take on the role of room parent. This role is very important and greatly appreciated by the staff, as the basic job of room parents is to assist the teachers. Room parents are requested to attend an informational meeting where they are informed about upcoming school events and can support both the classroom and the school.



Room parents are asked to help in the planning of special events and parties, and by phoning or emailing other parents for assistance. Some room parents might be asked to assist with special projects during school hours, or prep materials at home. In the event of an unexpected school closing, they might be asked to phone or email the other classroom parents.

We typically celebrate these holidays:

October- Halloween party

December- Winter Holiday party

February- Valentine's Day party

June- End of the Year party

The teachers will let the room parents know what food and paper products will be needed for each party. We try to keep snacks healthy and simple, and always adhere to our safe snack list. We have a no candy/food "goodie bag" policy at school due to food allergies.

As a room parent, you would receive a class list complete with parents' names, email addresses, and phone numbers. This information is confidential and must be used for school purposes only.

Parent Suggestions

Parent suggestions are always welcome. Your written suggestions and feedback should be deposited in the outdoor mail slot by door #1. We will also send home two parent surveys one in January and another in June.

Behavior Management

Basic techniques include gentle guidance, redirection, natural consequences, and communication of feelings.

Our goal at the Purpose School is to encourage children to develop and practice social skills that will ultimately allow them to positively interact with a wide variety of people, in several settings. We encourage them to resolve conflicts collaboratively and peacefully. Purpose School, teachers use a positive re-direction of inappropriate behavior. By stating limits in a clear, child-centered manner, we hope to build a child's ability to practice pro-social behavior. By respecting a child's age-appropriate behavior, our program and schedule of daily activities are designed to support the child's natural energy. This plan often eliminates behavioral issues.

When a child is struggling behaviorally, teachers and directors will meet, seek parental input and design a behavior plan to meet the child's individual needs. Children are always treated with respect and dignity. No punitive measures are ever used in this effort to guide children's behavior. Children who may demonstrate overly aggressive behavior resulting in the injury of peers or staff will be assisted to the Director's office. The parent will be contacted for a one-day dismissal if needed.

Health and Safety

First Congregational Church/Purpose School is a smoke-free building.
Please no family dogs on school property.

Medications

A doctor's note or pharmacy label designating the medication, its dosage, and criteria for administering is required for the staff to administer any medication, prescription or non-prescription.

Parents will need to complete a medication form before a staff member can administer any medication.

Over-the-counter drugs (i.e. Tylenol, Sudafed, and cough syrups) can only be administered by the staff if accompanied by a doctor's note, which states the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, and the criteria for administering the medication.

The Purpose School staff cannot administer any drug/medicine that has expired. A daily record of medication administered by staff is maintained in the child's file, located in Director's office.

Chronic Health Conditions

We are required to have an Individual Health Care Plan on file for a student with a chronic health condition. If your child has a chronic medical condition (Food Allergies, asthma, etc.), you will be asked to have your child's pediatrician fill out this form and sign off on any medicine that might be required while at school. We will review this plan yearly.

First Aid

Classroom teachers receive yearly training in administering EPI pens. EPI pens will be contained in a labeled plastic container and be carried in the backpack by the teacher while on walking trips outside of the building.

All unused medication will be returned to Director's office and returned to the parent at the end of the year by the support teacher.

The first aid kit is located in the office and checked monthly by hallway support staff, who then advise the Director if supplies are needed. The entire school staff is trained in the "5 Rights of Medicine". Please note that staff members can never give the first dose of any new medicine. This first dose must be given at home so parents can closely watch for any reaction. All topical medications, including sunscreen, require a written medical release. We recommend the home application of sunscreen before attending school on warm, sunny days.



Isolation of Mildly Ill Children

Parents are requested to call the Purpose School to inform the Director of the child's illness. Children who become ill, or cannot keep up with the school routine during the school session will be removed from class to the comfort of the Director's office. Parents will be called immediately to pick up their children.

Children will be offered quiet play activities and the opportunity to rest while waiting for their parents to arrive. Director and/or support teacher will provide supervision of mildly ill children.

Typically, an illness that would call for a child to stay home would include a temperature of 100 and over, nasal discharge that is not clear, "pinkeye", rash or skin infection, cough, a verbal complaint of illness, loose stools, and lethargy. A child who is continuously inconsolable and requires one on one attention should not be in school. For contagious illnesses, children must be on medicine for 24 hours before returning to school.

We track all reported illnesses on the school attendance board, a health form is posted for parents to see what illnesses might be in the school.

Managing Infectious Diseases, Illnesses, and Medications

A good Preschool is one with a strict health policy to protect all children for the health and well-being of your child and others at school:

1. An updated physical examination form must be kept on file. These physicals are good for one year after the date of the exam. No child is allowed to enter or remain in school without a recent physical or record of immunizations.
2. Children need proof of lead screening to attend school.
3. Children are expected to stay at home and will be sent home if they are running a temperature of 100 or higher, have 2 or more loose stools, are vomiting, have excessive, uncontrollable coughing or green runny nose, or have any contagious illness such as flu.
4. Children will be sent home with an unusual rash and/or excessive itching and skin irritation to see a doctor. Please return to school with a signed doctor's note.
5. Children will be sent home to see a doctor if their eyes are red and produce yellow or green crusty discharge. Some conjunctivitis can be treated with an antibiotic.
6. Children may re-enter a program after an illness if: They have been fever-free and/or symptom-free for 24 hours without medication
 - They do not pose a threat of spreading the infection to other children
 - They have been granted permission from their doctor
 - They have had a 24-hour course of antibiotics
7. Children may attend when they have a minor cold, but not when thick mucus discharge is constantly flowing from the eyes and nose. If a child comes to school, he/she is expected to participate in a full program, including outdoor play.

8. Any child showing signs of a contagious illness will be isolated, parents will be notified and the child will be sent home.
9. School will notify parents concerning contagious diseases that have been introduced into the school by posting on the Daily attendance board in the hallway. Your child's identity is protected.
10. The Director will report all necessary communicable diseases to the appropriate agencies.
11. Parents must report to school if their child is diagnosed with any communicable disease.
12. Mask might be required by the State, Town, or school due to current health concerns at any time during the school year. Parents will be informed when any mask-wearing is required.

Health Consultant

Purpose School Director consults a medically licensed individual to consult as needed on health-related issues. The Stoneham Board of Health meets two times a year with the Director to review policy, procedures, and records.

Stoneham Public Health Dept., 35 Central Street, Stoneham MA (781) 438-0501

Injury Prevention

The classroom teacher will monitor and report any potential classroom injury hazard to the Director daily (broken equipment, etc.). Children are encouraged to wear rubber-soled shoes to school. Parents are required to remove all hanging, loose ties (drawstrings) from children's clothing to prevent any potential injury to the neck while engaged in play. Teachers daily inspect classrooms, halls, and playgrounds to ensure a safe environment.

Communicable Disease

Purpose School is committed to the health and safety of all children and staff. Children and staff who have been identified as having a communicable disease will be excluded from attendance

at school. Parents will receive written notice of exposure to communicable diseases. Parents with consultation from a physician shall inform Purpose School of the child's non-communicable disease status and return date to school.

Family Pets

For health and safety reasons, we ask that no pets be brought into the school unless a special visit has been arranged with your child's classroom teacher.

Infection Control Procedures

First Congregational Church Janitor (20 hours per week) cleans Purpose School daily after school sessions. All floors and rugs are vacuumed daily, tables and floors are washed with a non-toxic anti-bacterial commercial cleaner. Trash bins are lined daily with plastic liners and washed with bleach weekly. Bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily.

Support teachers maintain sanitary conditions in bathrooms during school sessions, including the re-stocking of drinking cups, paper towels, latex gloves, and toilet tissue.

Classroom equipment, toys, and materials are maintained and washed regularly by classroom teachers. Disposable eating utensils, plates, and cups are used in the classrooms.

Universal Health precautions are maintained by the staff at all times when introduced to the body fluids including blood. Each classroom and “outside the building” backpacks are equipped with disposable gloves. All staff is instructed to wash hands before and after attending to children. A bottle of commercial hand sanitizer is kept in an adult-accessible location in the classroom. Whenever your child is injured, you will receive an accident report that explains the injury. The parent or assigned adult who is picking up the student that day will be asked to sign the accident report and receive a copy to take home with the child. A copy of this report is placed in the child’s file as well as logged into the school’s main accident log. This log is reviewed by the director and then by the Department of Early Education and Care when they come for a site visit/inspection.

Emergencies

All staff maintains an up-to-date certification in American Red Cross First Aid procedures as well as American Heart Association Pediatric CPR certification. If your child becomes seriously ill or injured in school, we will call you immediately. First aid will be performed and lots of TLC will be given. All injuries that require first aid to your child will be reported to you in writing. An injury report form signed by the parent will be entered into the child’s record.

If we cannot reach you, we will contact the person whom you have listed on the enrollment form as an emergency contact. If we feel a delay in getting your child medical help will be dangerous, we will take the child and his or her medical records by ambulance to the Emergency Room of the hospital listed on the child’s emergency card, or the closest available hospital. If you ever have any questions about an injury, please speak to your child’s teacher as soon as possible.

School Inspections

The Purpose School is inspected and licensed every year by the Department of Early Education and Care. *Other yearly inspections include:*

- Stoneham Board of Health
- Atlas Alarm Company
- Keane Fire and Safety Equipment
- Stoneham Building Department
- Stoneham Fire Department

Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a staff member realizes that a child is missing when taking a routine headcount, she/he must quickly identify the missing child and inform the Program Director. The Director will immediately lock down the building and rally extra staff to search the building. Another staff member will conduct an outdoor perimeter check. If the child is not immediately found, the Director will call 911, parents, and the Department of Early Education and Care. Extra staff will continue to search and follow the direction of public officials.

Evacuation Policy

The Director conducts regular (monthly) school evacuation drills. Evacuation exit plans are posted in each classroom and checked by Director. When instructed by the Director, the Hallway Staff activates the (in school) emergency bell. Teachers will alert children and take a headcount as they exit the classroom and proceed (with emergency bags) out designated exits. If the designated exit is blocked; teachers will find the nearest safe exit. The Director and hallway staff will make a final sweep of all classrooms and make sure that the entire building has been cleared.

The evacuation meeting spot will be across Church Street on the Town Common. Once evacuated to Town Common, teachers will take attendance and report numbers to hallway staff who will compare the numbers to the daily attendance sheet. An accurate count is announced to the Director who will then give instructions based on the situation at hand. If it is a drill, teachers will be instructed to return to the building.

If an actual evacuation is necessary, the teachers will be instructed to walk the children to Saint Patrick's School at 20 Pleasant Street. Upon arrival, the Director will designate a few staff members to notify parents via cell phones of the location change and ask that they pick up their children as soon as possible. Necessary parent contact information, as well as medicine and first aid supplies, will be on hand in the previously described emergency bag.

Please note that if an evacuation is due to a larger town-wide situation, we will follow the lead of emergency personnel and relocate as directed. Other possible evacuation locations are Town Hall, Stoneham Middle School, and Stoneham Public Library. If a situation requires us to shelter at Saint Patrick's, or in place at Purpose School for an extended period, both locations can provide us with food, water, bathrooms, and activities.

Please make sure that you always notify us of any new or changed emergency phone and cell phone numbers.

Lock-Down Procedures

“Lock-down” procedures are designed to keep children and staff safe within the facility until police or other emergency responders can respond and eliminate the threat. In a facility with multiple classrooms, such as a preschool, “lock-down” typically involves gathering all the children in their classroom, closing and locking all interior doors, and covering interior windows. Lights in each classroom will be turned off, and children will be asked to sit on the floor and remain quiet, out of sight of the classroom windows.

The Director will call 911, instruct hallway staff to alert teachers of immediate threats verbally or via walkie-talkies. Teachers will lock doors, cover windows, turn off lights, gather children as mentioned above and wait for emergency personnel. However, in certain situations (depending on the proximity of the threat, the number of staff available and the possibility of escape), it may be best for some or all of the occupants to flee the building when an intruder enters. Each classroom teacher will take control of the situation and handle the safety of her/his students to the best of her ability. All classrooms, school office, hallway monitor, and church secretary have walkie-talkies in their work areas to communicate with each other when emergencies arise both in school and outside of the building.

Identifying and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF): 22 Pleasant Street Malden, MA. Phone (781) 388-7100, Fax (781) 324-2209.

As mandated reporters, staff receive yearly training on how to recognize signs of abuse and/or neglect including sexual abuse and emotional abuse and/or neglect.

Teachers will report suspected abuse or neglect to the Director, who will notify D.C.F. and inform the Purpose School Committee. A verbal report (51A) will be made within 24 hours, followed by a written report within 48 hours. Our health care consultant could be consulted if abuse or neglect was questionable before such a report.

Director will notify reporting staff members of the actions taken regarding her/his report. If a staff member is not satisfied with said action, she/he will call D.C.F. directly on behalf of the child. Allegations of abuse/neglect by staff members would be reported first to the school Director and then to the Purpose School Committee. Procedures for reporting such abuse/neglect would be the same as if a parent were involved. Any allegation against a staff member or the school itself will be reported to the EEC (Department of Early Education and Care), as well as D.C.F. A suspected staff member would not be allowed to work directly with children until the EEC and D.C.F. investigations were completed. Director and all staff members will fully cooperate in any investigation. All requirements of the EEC will be met before the return of the staff member.

All staff are required to produce a clear C.O.R.I. (Criminal Offense Record Investigation), SORI, and fingerprinted before employment.

Withdrawal/Termination

When parents decide to terminate the arrangements for preschool, thirty-day notice (with tuition paid) must be given to the school Director.

The Purpose School recognizes that not every situation is appropriate for every child. If for any reason, this program is found to be unsatisfactory for any particular child, we will make every effort to discuss with the parents the cause of concern and make the necessary adjustments such as a reduction in days or hours.

When a child's behavior continues to be unacceptable or endangers other children, or requires 1 on 1 attention, the child may be referred for professional evaluation according to program referral procedures. The Purpose School does not feel, in most cases, that suspension of a child is needed when teachers and parents are working together to help the child through a difficult situation.

Purpose School will work closely with the child and family to make the school experience as successful as possible. Together, developing a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program works well for the child who is having difficulty. Director has referrals for parents for evaluations or therapeutic services. When parent training or workshops are offered, we will post for parents to attend.

When the child's adjustment to the program is unsatisfactory and the arrangements for the individual child's needs are not being properly met, and if the teachers have determined that they can- not provide for the child, it is in the best interest of the child to seek another placement. Termination will be made on a timeline that serves the interest of the child who is leaving, as well as the other children in the program. Adequate time for "good-byes" will be provided.

Other reasons that may result in the termination of a specific child's enrollment include:

Non-payment of tuition or lack of adherence to tuition payment policies.

Absence of cooperation from parents with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings or conferences.

Abusive behaviors and/or verbal threats by parents toward program staff or other parents.

Parents disciplining children (other than their own), in any way, while at the program.

Child exhibits special needs or needs related to a serious illness that cannot be met through program accommodations. In this case, the program staff will make every effort to involve the parents and other resource persons to determine the best course of action for the child.

Chronically late picking up a child at the scheduled time. More than 3 instances will result in a late fee.

Non-payment of the first tuition installment by the deadline will result in a loss of placement.

First Congregational Church School Committee

The School Committee is made up of five members of the church, selected by the Trustees. The committee meets once a month with the Director to check in on school operations. The committee then reports back to the church Trustees.

The School Committee oversees:

Supervision of the Director and staff

The budget

Written Parent concerns

Parent surveys results

Handbook and policy changes

All requests for Purpose School use of church space



Referral Resources

Health Care Consultants:

Stoneham Board of Health 35 Central Street Stoneham, MA 02180
(781) 438-0501

Child Services: Early Intervention:

Boston Regional Child Development
#8F Henshaw Street Woburn, MA
(781) 935-3855

North Shore Children's Developmental Assessment
Diagnostic Clinic:
(978) 745-2100



Evaluation & Speech Therapy

Stoneham South School (781) 279-3880
Boston Medical Center (617) 638-8000
Child at Risk Hotline 1-800-792-5200
Lead Poison Prevention 1-800-532-9571
Mass Dental Society 1-800-342-8747
Mass Eye and Ear Associates 617-523-7900

Hospitals

Children's Hospital: Main (617) 355-6000
Child Development Unit (617) 355-6511
C.O.R.E. Evaluations (617) 355-7025
Winchester Hospital (781) 729-9000
Melrose/Wakefield Hospital (781) 979-3000

Schools

Stoneham Public Schools (781) 279-3800
Melrose Public Schools (781) 662-2000
Reading Public Schools (781) 942-9043
Wakefield Public Schools (781) 246-6400
Winchester Public Schools (781) 721-7001
Medford Public Schools (781) 393-2268
Woburn Public Schools (781) 937-8204

Parenting

Families First, Positive Discipline and Parenting (781) 868-7687
Parental Stress Line (800) 632-8188
Parents helping Parents (800) 882-1250

Notes: