



Parent Handbook of Policies and Procedures

*Updated 1/2023

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Mill Pond Nursery and Childcare provides a wide range of age-appropriate learning opportunities for children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age in a safe and nurturing environment that promotes learning through structured play and creative expression where children can develop and grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally, while also learning the physical skills necessary for day-to-day life. We are licensed by NY State to provide care for 44 children in Stony Brook. We are licensed to provide care for 74 children at our Port Jefferson Station location.

Mill Pond was founded by Sarah Gounaris in 2013. Our first year in Stony Brook we operated strictly as a ½ day nursery school, offering only 3-hour programs. In 2014 we expanded our program to offer care for infants and toddlers as well as full day programs for 6 weeks- Pre-k. The 2021-22 school year will be our 9th school year here in Stony Brook. Our Port Jefferson Station location is now on its 5th school year.

We offer a variety of programs to meet your child's individual needs and your family's individual schedule. Each classroom takes into consideration the age, maturity level, and developmental stage of your child and follows Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Our Preschool class follows NY States Common Core Standards for Pre-K which can be found here:

<https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-prekindergarten-foundation-for-the-common-core>

The Center's leadership consists of the following individuals and positions:

Owner: Sarah Gounaris

Director Stony Brook: Kristin Cline

Assistant Director Stony Brook: Darleen Nulty

Director Setauket/Port Jeff: Sarah Gounaris

Assistant Director Setauket/Port Jeff: Samantha Blandi

In addition, there are the teachers who have chosen to contribute their talents and expertise to Mill Pond. Welcome to the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare family!

PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide affordable childcare to diverse families within the Three Village community, with emphasis on children of students and employees at Stony Brook University. We provide a wide range of age-appropriate learning opportunities for children from 6 weeks to Pre-K age in a safe and nurturing environment that promotes learning through structured play and creative expression where children can develop and grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally, while also learning the physical skills necessary for day-to-day life.

At Mill Pond we believe that children have the greatest opportunity to grow and develop in a safe, loving, and respectful environment. This environment is the foundation of our program. At Mill Pond we respect all children and their individual feelings and experiences.

At Mill Pond we believe that a quality caregiver never sits back with ease and accepts that there is no more room for improvement. No matter how wonderful the program is, or how well trained the teacher, there is always more that can be done. Every day our teachers learn through experience, but it is also their responsibility to stay current on issues relating to childcare and development. We also require all our teachers to complete 30 hours of training every 2 years which includes CPR/First Aid.

COVID-19 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

***At this time, we recommend everyone follow Suffolk County Department of Health's recommendations should your child or any of our teachers develop Covid-19. Please refer to the section on health and safety policies in this handbook.**

School closings due to COVID-19: In the event that your child is required to quarantine for any amount of time, tuition will still be owed as usual. If the Health Department or any government officials direct us to close the building for a period exceeding 10 days in a row, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic or any other health related emergency, you will not be required to pay any additional tuition. Any tuition already paid will be credited when we re-open.

PROGRAM GOALS

Although all children learn differently, most have a general need in each stage of their childhood that can be met by their caregiver. At Mill Pond we strive to create an environment that supports children at each stage of their development.

Infants: The first step of development for an infant is trust. In our infant class we strive to provide a comfortable and predictable environment where infants feel at ease with the opportunities to explore themselves and the world around them. Each infant has different schedules reflective of his/her own personality. It is the adult's role to accept each infant's uniqueness and provide a safe and stimulating environment in which to grow. The infant program provides for the following goals:

1. To care for infants in a warm, affectionate way that lets each child know that he/she is a special person, including the physical affection and cuddling that is so important at this stage of development
2. To meet each child's physical needs fully
3. To implement strict sanitation procedures that are adhered to, faithfully
4. To provide opportunities for exploring, learning and social interaction through a variety of daily activities
5. To prepare activities to stimulate the senses, recognizing that infants learn through the use of their eyes, ears, fingers, sense of taste and smell
6. To prevent over-stimulation and disorder; and to provide opportunities for one-to-one interactions between children and staff
7. To provide opportunities for the use of large and small motor skills with both indoor and outdoor activities
8. To provide a safe environment for exploration
9. To provide a consistency between Child Care and Home Care practices that will be most beneficial to the infant and will offer the parents an opportunity to influence the kind of care that their child receives.
10. To establish an observation system in which a daily outline/check list on each child is kept
11. To be supportive of parents, encouraging involvement, education, and open, honest communication while using tact and discretion

Infants learn by experiencing the environment through their senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling), by physically moving around and through social interactions. Non-mobile infants absorb and organize a great deal of information about the world around them, so adults need to talk and sing with them about what is happening and bring them objects to observe and manipulate. At times, adults carry non-mobile infants around the environment to show them interesting events and people. Mobile infants and toddlers increasingly use toys, language, and other learning materials in their play. Adults play a vital socialization role with infants. Warm, positive relationships with adults help infants develop a sense of trust in the world and feelings of competence. These interactions are critical for the

development of the children's healthy self-esteem. The trusted adult becomes the secure base from which the mobile infant explores the environment.

The most appropriate teaching technique for this age group is to give ample opportunities for the children to use repetition to practice newly acquired skills and to experience feelings of autonomy and success. Infants will bat at, grasp, bang, or drop their toys. Imitation, hiding, and naming games are also important for learning at this age.

Play opportunities are essential throughout early childhood. For infants this means sensory experiences and adults who cuddle and talk to them. It means careful selection of toys and materials that stimulate and challenge them but are not over-stimulating. As the infants become more mobile, they should be able to count on a safe and interesting environment to explore. Some activities for this age group might include: scooting on the floor, looking in a reflective mirror, reaching for objects to grasp. Language activities that begin as "Ma Ma" or "Da Da" will soon become extended through repeating words of an adult's stories, songs, and finger plays. Opportunities to develop large muscles can be found in walking, climbing up and down, pushing toys; and for small muscles, in sensory play with water, sand, etc.: feeling different textures, stacking blocks, nesting toys, etc. Art activities are provided to give infants an exposure to a variety of materials and enjoyment for the process of the project.

An infant can feel secure and develop a sense of trust as the adults in his/her world respond to individual needs of hunger, thirst, sleep, and security with a flexible and individualized daily routine.

Toddlers: The toddler stage can be one of the most challenging (and rewarding) times. Toddlers are very mobile and active using all five senses to discover the world. Adults are challenged to provide a safe but stimulating environment in which the child can grow. The toddler responds well to regular daily routine with set mealtimes, rest times and play times. Toilet training is best accomplished by taking the child to the toilet at the same times each day.

Important independence skills are being acquired during these years, including personal care such as toileting, feeding and dressing. Patience is essential as a toddler struggles to master skills (developing independence at this stage occurs after much repetition and encouragement). Realistic toys will enable children to engage in increasingly complex types of play and practice.

Toddlers are learning to produce language rapidly. They need simple books, pictures, puzzles, and music, plus time and space for active play such as jumping, running and dancing. Toddlers are acquiring social skills, but in groups there should be several of the same toy because egocentric toddlers are not yet able to understand the concept of sharing.

Program goals for children approximately 18 months to 36 months are:

1. To provide a nurturing, flexible and calm environment where physical affection is freely given, self-concept is enhanced, independence is encouraged, and expectations are made clear.
2. To meet each child's physical needs while setting the stage for future independence in selfcare. i.e. toilet teaching, putting on coats, putting on shoes, etc.
3. To establish respect for the environment, the equipment, and materials
4. To promote emotional growth

- a. To build self-confidence and a sense of self-worth, by allowing choices within limits and to build on successful experiences 8
 - b. To provide a warm, accepting environment in which children can work and play
 - c. To encourage curiosity and a sense of wonder with an environment that is designed to limit the use of "no"
5. To promote social growth
- a. To promote and instill a sense of caring for, and sensitivity towards others; foundations for respect are established
 - b. To model acceptable behavior which is critical to the toddlers who are practicing and learning cooperative and group play
6. To promote intellectual growth
- a. To instill a sense of curiosity
 - b. To provide an atmosphere where children discover and explore
 - c. To provide experiences with open-ended questions and where process, not product is emphasized
 - d. To provide a wide variety of activities within an outline where cooperative play is encouraged. Curriculum areas of art, math, science, cooking, music and movement, large muscle, practical life, dramatic play, language arts and fine motor activities are provided. Through these activities, children are learning to be able to trust their own desires/choices about what they learn, hear, see and do. They also begin to share these experiences with others
7. To promote physical/motor development
- a. To provide a variety of active ways children can use their bodies to participate in fine and gross motor activities both indoors and outdoors
 - b. To encourage participation in simple games and songs
8. To provide the language development that is so important at this stage of development
9. To make available a good variety and quantity of materials on the shelves at the child's level i.e. manipulative, dramatic play, pull toys, puzzles, books, etc.
10. To develop self-help skills in order to create a feeling of independence and confidence in the child (this can be accomplished by toilet training, encouraging them to try to help dress themselves and letting them help serve food at meals, etc.)
11. To provide care in small groups to give each child more personal attention, prevent under/over-stimulation, allow more freedom of choice and maintain a more relaxed atmosphere

The toddler group is a diverse one. Providing a variety of activities with many choices is essential to enhancing each child's developmental progress. Activities will be designed with the developmental level of each child in mind. The following are such activities:

* Introducing sensory experiences with materials such as:

- Pudding
- Tasting and smelling boxes
- Jell-O Cornstarch
- Water table
- Music/rhythm instruments
- Sand table
- Bubbles
- Rice/Macaroni
- Play Dough
- Flour Textured Books
- Corn meal
- Flashlights
- Karo Syrup
- finger painting
- Shaving cream
- Noise makers/Bean shakers
- Silly putty

* Encouraging cognitive development and language acquisition by:

- Reading and re-telling favorite stories
- Working on recognizing and naming the teachers and children in the classroom using photographs of the children
- Reinforcing aspects of the routines, such as: snack time, lunch time, nap time, etc.
- Working with the older toddlers on learning the words and actions to the songs we sing: i.e. by singing to the children and encouraging them to sing along.
- Encouraging the toddlers to talk more by: using puppets asking lots of questions (open-ended) reading stories and asking lots of questions

* Verbalizing with the children while they are playing so as to provide a springboard for the children's own verbalizations. Language should be incorporated into every activity throughout the day, using:

- Simple songs and finger plays
- Puppet plays Tape recorder
- Object labeling Simple directions (up, on, over)
- Story time
- Nursery rhymes
- Memory games
- Counting games

Color matching
Alphabet games
Dolls
Sorting activities

* Increasing the child's ability to recognize common objects, using:

Picture books
Picture cards of simple, common objects
Object boxes
Shape sorter
Lotto games or matching games
Three basic shapes - circle, square, triangle
Art activities with these shapes (pasting)
Simple cooking activities - mixing, pouring and sorting

* Providing the child with opportunities to participate in self-help activities designed to promote the growing independence desired by toddlers, such as:

Washing hands and face
Eating with spoon and fork
Throwing away cup and napkin
Taking off/putting on socks and shoes, coat, etc.
Putting away toys
Washing and drying dishes
Bathing and drying dolls
Becoming aware of the rules of safety
Potty training (where appropriate)

* Enhancing social and emotional development, by:

- Setting limits in such a way that the child learns self-regulation
- Enforcing the rules: you may not hurt yourself; you may not hurt others; and you may not hurt the materials, equipment, or other things in the environment.
- Using the methods of distraction, substitution, alternative activity or corrective guidance when necessary
- Encouraging the children to use words rather than pushing or hitting other children
- Helping children play well independently among a larger group of children

* Providing materials and activities important in advancing a child's coordination, focusing on:

Fine Motor Development

Pouring and sifting
Cutting play-dough with scissors
Filling and dumping
Puzzle work
Peg boards

- Shape sorting
- Nesting Sewing cards
- Stacking
- Lego blocks
- Putting shapes through holes
- Button and snap boards
- Snap beads
- Twisting jar lids, nuts and bolts
- Stringing beads
- Art activities
- Macaroni necklaces

Gross Motor Development

- Dancing and marching
- Swinging
- Walking outside when weather permits
- Pulling toys and wagons
- Sliding Circle games and songs
- Climbing stairs
- Crawling under and through
- Climbing
- Jumping
- Hanging off bars/ropes
- Stretching exercises
- Playing ball

* Scheduling daily activities that encourage children to express themselves creatively by participating in basic art activities such as:

- Painting with brushes
- Creating
- Easel painting
- Collages and montages
- Finger painting
- Murals with chalk, crayon, paint
- String painting
- Potato prints
- Sponge painting
- Food coloring pictures
- Marble painting
- Mobiles
- Q-tip painting
- Tearing paper
- Salt painting
- Crayon activities

Water painting
Coloring with crayon and chalk

Preschool: At preschool age, children are learning many cognitive skills to prepare them for kindergarten. For some educators, it is natural to dismiss the importance of play and hands on experiences at this age and spend more time on structured, teacher directed lessons where children sit at tables and do worksheets. There are other educators who feel that preschoolers are too young and immature to handle such rigorous work as reading, writing and arithmetic, so they provided an environment that is all play without incorporating any cognitive learning. At MPNS we believe that the best environment for preschoolers is one that consists of much developmentally appropriate play with cognitive learning incorporated. We strive to support the preschoolers need to play by encouraging them to explore, inquire, and discover. We believe that by supporting each child's curiosity to learn and their creativity through hands on experiences, that they will be more than ready for Kindergarten.

Significance of preschool stage: The most important area is for adults to promote preschooler's self-esteem. In every area of his development: physical, cognitive, psychosocial, the child strives and looks for adult support. Children need periodic adult reinforcement in the form of one-on-one time, a hug, smile or touch. Preschoolers have a greater capacity than younger children for learning and abiding by simple rules and clear consequences.

They enjoy playing with peers. The beginning of cooperative play and sharing develops. Conflicts can begin to be addressed with simple problem-solving techniques.

Preschoolers develop in many areas and independence is promoted by providing choices in a wide range of activities for this age group.

Program Goals:

1. To build self-confidence and a sense of self-worth, by allowing choices within limits and to build on successful experiences
2. To promote and instill a sense of caring for, and sensitivity towards others
3. To provide a nurturing, relaxed and non-sexist environment with caring adults where self-esteem is enhanced; independence encouraged; free choice decisions offered; social skills acquired; and individuality respected
4. To provide large portions of time where the child can be alone or with friends participating in a range of different and satisfying activities. The activities will be planned for the following curriculum areas: art, science, history, geography, wood working, cooking, music and movement, practical life, dramatic play, language arts, and mathematics
5. To provide children with opportunities to gain competence in a variety of skills and techniques that increase their interest and control over their environment
6. To provide for each child's physical well-being while in our care
7. To provide opportunities to develop gross motor skills and coordination through physically active play

8. To develop in the child an active curiosity about the world in which he/she lives, and an enthusiasm for learning which stimulates exploratory behavior and creativity
9. To help the child gain self-discipline in an environment where he/she knows the limits and expectations
10. To develop in each child an appreciation for beauty and nature
11. To provide an atmosphere in the classroom which promotes respect for self, others, and materials
12. To provide a wide variety of activities within a routine where cooperative play/work is encouraged, and multiple skills are developed. Through these activities, children are learning to trust their own desires/decisions about what they will learn, hear, see and do and to begin sharing these experiences with others.

Many times, when parents observe or visit preschools/child care centers, they think that children are "just playing". However, the way children learn best is through play. Robert Fulghum states, "Learning is taking place at all times in all circumstances for every person." What looks like "just play" to an adult, is the child learning, growing and developing new skills. Some examples of what children are learning through play in our centers include:

Language Arts Center promotes:

- Vocabulary growth
- Listening skills
- Reading readiness skills
- Oral language skills
- Interest in and respect for books
- Appreciation of good literature
- Imagination
- Increased attention span

Outdoor Play Area:

- Develops large muscle coordination
- Increases social development and communication skills
- Provides opportunities for sharing
- Provides opportunities for roll playing
- Fosters safety awareness

Math Centers help a child:

- Recognize numbers, counting items
- Understand the relationship between a numeral and a set of objects
- Learn that counting is both meaningful and fun
- Understand such terms as big/little, more/less, etc
- Recognize and name basic geometric shapes

- Become aware of and begin to appreciate the practical uses of numbers seen around him/her every day, e.g. clocks, calendars, money, etc.

Practical Life Areas:

- Encourage the children to do tasks on their own
- Promote eye hand coordination, patience, waiting turns, etc.
- Give opportunities for hand washing, practicing proper meal manners, grace and courtesy lessons
- Help children explore zipping, snapping, buckling, scooping and pouring, sorting, wiping tables, using materials properly
- Provide opportunities for pouring milk, juice, cereal; setting tables, preparing food, taste and smell comparisons, sharing

Art Centers:

- Provide opportunities for creativity and imagination
- Develop small and large muscle skills
- Develop color concepts
- Provide a release for positive and negative feelings
- Develop reading readiness skills
- Develop prewriting skills
- Encourage an appreciation for the arts

Manipulative/Sensorial Activities:

- Develop small muscle coordination
- Increase social development and communication skills
- Foster imagination
- Teach mathematical concepts (shapes, size, counting)
- Provide opportunities for problem solving

Dramatic Play Areas:

- Provide an opportunity to role play home/life experiences
- Increase social development and communication skills
- Develop small and large muscle coordination
- Develop self-awareness
- Develop visual discrimination skills

Block Play:

- Provides practice with social skills
- Develops gross and fine motor skills
- Teaches mathematical concepts (shape, size, balance, counting)
- Increases creativity and decision making skills
- Develops visual discrimination skills
- Provides an opportunity for role play
- Increases communication skills and oral vocabulary

Reading/Quiet Area:

- Develop and improve listening skills
- Teach the letters of the alphabet and their sounds, as children become interested
- Develop the skill of matching
- Provide quiet areas and the opportunity for a child to:
 - Learn to relax
 - Learn to appreciate and enjoy good books
 - Learn to enjoy being alone

Science Centers:

- Develop an awareness of and respect for the natural environment
- Develop observation and discrimination skills
- Encourage a child's curiosity
- Encourage sorting and classifying skills on the basis of size, shape and texture
- Develop an awareness of their bodies

Music and Movement:

- Develops listening skills
- Encourages children to learn musical tunes which they can sing and words which they can repeat
- Helps a child learn to control motor impulses
- Promotes enjoyment and appreciation for music
- Expresses freedom of movement and awareness of the body and space
- Provides exploration and familiarity with different musical instruments

HOURS OF OPERATION, VACATION, AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Hours:

Mill Pond is open from 7AM to 6PM at our PJ Station location and 7 AM to 5:30 PM at our Stony Brook location. Hours of care will be contracted from child to child. Tuition prices for full day childcare include 9 hours. Anything beyond 9 hours will be an additional fee. We do not allow any children to be in our care more than 10 hours. No care will be given on Saturdays and Sundays.

Holidays School Closings:

If your child is only enrolled in our “mini-day” classes, we follow the Three Village School District for school closings and holidays. You will receive a calendar prior to the beginning of our 10-month school program in September.

The rest of our policy is for families enrolled in our full-time program ONLY. If you have any questions about whether you are considered part-time or full-time, please speak to the director.

Tuition for both programs is the same each month regardless of holidays/vacations, snow days, emergency closings, or days your child may be sick. It is a yearly tuition that we have broken down into monthly payments to make it easier for you.

Mill Pond will be closed for 14 days total throughout the year for each location. These days can change year to year so please see the bulletin board for a posted list of school closings or ask the Director.

If a holiday falls on a weekend, we will close accordingly:

Holiday falls on a Saturday, we will close on Friday

Holiday falls on a Sunday, we will close on Monday

Vacation Time Unpaid:

For full-time families ONLY (does not include “mini-day”):

Parents will receive 1 week of vacation after 6 months of continuous care (ie: If your child is signed up for only 2 days a week, you will get 2 days’ vacation...3 days will get 3 days’ vacation, 4 days will get 4 days vacations, etc). Vacation days will renew each year on the anniversary of your start date. You cannot save vacation time for the following year. Please speak to the Director **prior** to requesting vacation days. In the event of an extended leave of absence families will forfeit their 1 week of vacation. An extended leave of absence is a period of greater than two weeks. For example if you pull your child out for the summer.

If you choose to have your child take an unpaid leave of absence (ie: summer vacation) you will then run the risk of losing your child’s spot in the classroom. Unpaid spots will not be held throughout the summer. We cannot guarantee that there will be availability in your child’s classroom after an unpaid leave of absence. If you do not want to risk losing your child’s spot, then you are responsible for paying tuition during the leave of absence (ie: summer vacation) whether your child attends the center or not. Families that are on a wait list or wish to enroll will be filling unpaid spots in the classrooms. The director will call you while on a leave of absence if your child is in danger of losing their spot at Mill Pond. You will then have the option to bring your child back to the center at that time. Occasionally special arrangements can be made. Please see director to do so.

Closing due to inclement weather:

If Three Village schools are cancelled due to weather conditions, Mill Pond will also close. If Three Village has a 2-hour delay, we will open at 9 am. If Three Village Closes early or cancels after school programs we will generally close at 3 pm depending on the situation, but we will make every effort to stay open. There are many factors we must take into consideration when making the decision to close. First and foremost is safety, the ability to remove snow at the center, or other conditions that could pose a danger to the children, staff, or facility. If Mill Pond is closed, we will send a message through Brightwheel to all our families as well as post on our website and Facebook page. You can also check News 12 Long Island to see if Three Village is closed.

Please note that no credit will be given for closings due to inclement weather.

School closings announced during the school day:

If it becomes necessary to close during the day due to severe weather or any other circumstance, you will be notified via a phone call. If you have any concerns, please speak with the Program Director.

Absentee Policy:

If your child is ill & needs to miss a day, please call at least 1 hour before scheduled arrival time. Parents will still be responsible for that day's tuition.

We ask that you **please give us notice if you are going to be more than 1 hour late or after 10 am**. We need to maintain the mandated child/staff ratio and if you let us know in advance if you are running late, or your child will be out sick we can ensure that we have the proper amount of staff. **We do not accept children after 12 pm as it causes a disruption to the other children in our care.**

Parents agree to give two weeks' notice before ending a contract at Mill Pond. If two weeks' notice is not given, you will be billed and responsible for two week's tuition. Parents agree to pay the re-registration fee, \$100/family. Parents will also be responsible to give a deposit in the amount of 2 weeks tuition which goes toward their last 2 weeks of care. If proper notice is not given parents are responsible for full payment, whether the child attends the center for those 2 weeks or not. NOTE: An extended leave qualifies as an absence from daycare greater than 2 weeks' time. There is no discount to tuition for absences due to illness, weather, or emergency closings.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POLICY

Staff may be at the center earlier preparing the center for daily activity however children are not allowed to be brought into the center prior to 7 am. **Children must be picked up by 6 P.M. In order to compensate our staff, a late fee will be assessed to your account of \$1 for every minute past 6 pm.** This fee must be paid in full the next time your child is dropped off at the center. If you know you will be late, please call right away.

Parents can drop off to our staff at the door each day, or walk your child in. Teachers will sign your child in; however, you must speak to the teacher to make sure she/he knows your child has come into the classroom.

If anyone we have not met comes to pick up your child, we will verify that they are authorized IN WRITING to pick up your child and they must provide us with a valid photo ID. If there is a Court Order keeping one parent or guardian away from the child, MPNS must have a copy of the Court Order on file otherwise we cannot prevent the non-custodial parent from picking up the child.

If you have any concerns about pick-up or drop-off that we should be aware of, please speak with the director.

II. FINANCIAL INFORMATION TUITION RATES

We offer a variety of schedules to try and meet the needs of each individual family. Tuition is due the first of the month. You will receive an invoice through Brightwheel and you can pay online or bring in a check. We prefer online payments as it makes everything easier.

*Please see our flyer on the table at the entrance for current pricing or speak to the Director or Assistant Director.

Enrollment Fee:

An enrollment fee of \$100.00/family will be payable upon enrollment and each year thereafter, as well as a deposit in the amount of 2 weeks tuition. This deposit will be applied to your child's last 2 weeks of enrollment. A slot at Mill Pond will be considered open until the enrollment fee and deposit are received. After payment is received, we will hold your spot for your start date. Families must start within 2 weeks of proposed start date to maintain a spot. The deposit and enrollment fee are non-refundable should you choose to withdraw your child before starting. Should you re-enroll your child and then pull your child out to attend district Pre-K, you will forfeit your 2 week deposit. Do not enroll for Pre-K until you know if your child has been selected for the district Pre-K. We have plenty of Pre-k spots open.

PAYMENT POLICY

All payments are due by 12 P.M. on the 1st of each month. When other payment arrangements have been made with your contract, then payments will be made accordingly. Please only give payments to the Director or Assistant Director.

Types of Payment Accepted:

We use Brightwheel to send invoices and prefer this payment method. Please note that on Brightwheel you must use ACH debit, or you will be charged a credit card processing fee. We do accept cash check or money order as payment as well. A monthly receipt will be given upon request from the director and automatically when you pay online.

Late Payments:

Unless you speak to the Director about a different arrangement for payments, late payments will assess a late fee of \$25 if not paid by the 5th of the month and \$10 each day thereafter. If 2 weeks of the current month pass without receiving payment, your child will not be accepted into care. If 1 more week passes, your contract will be terminated, and the collection process will begin. You will be responsible for any costs related to collection of the tuition. These costs will include late fees, collection cost fees, and tuition fees.

Returned Checks:

A fee of \$30.00 will be charged for any returned checks. After two returned checks, all future payments must be made in cash or money order.

DISCOUNTS AND FUNDRAISING

Sibling Discount/Other Discounts:

For families with more than one child enrolled at Mill Pond, we offer a 15 % discount off the older child's tuition. This discount cannot be combined with any other discounts.

Fundraising Efforts:

Sometimes we need to make unplanned repairs, or we want to update classroom or playground equipment beyond what is in our regular monthly budget so we will do 1-2 fundraisers throughout the year. We would ask you to please consider participating in these fundraising events and to get your family and friends involved. Every dollar earned from fundraising goes straight to the betterment of the school.

ENROLLMENT AND TERMINATION POLICY

Childcare fees and tuition are due regardless of whether your child attends. You are paying to hold your child's spot, as well as for a service. No refunds are given for late arrivals or early departures. All childcare services will be contracted. The contract is a legal document obligating Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare to provide a service for you & obligating you to pay Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare for those services. There are other requirements in the contract. Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare urges you to thoroughly read the contract and parent handbook & recognize that it is legal & you will be held liable for each item in the contract. By signing the contract, you are accepting it in all its terms.

Enrollment: Before enrolling your child at Mill Pond there are several things you must do:

1. Read through & become familiar with the Policies. You will be required to sign a form that indicates you have read, understand, & agree to ALL the Policies as outlined.
2. An acquaintance visit must be made. MPNS will not enroll a child unless a visit has been made to become familiar with MPNS & its directors & staff. You must bring your child.
3. All appropriate forms must be filled out, signed, & on file PRIOR to your child starting. All necessary forms/consents will be given to you in your admission package. In the event that you do not properly fill out a form, you may not be allowed to leave your child in our care until the form is filled out properly. This is so we can abide by NYS laws.
4. All required supplies must be brought on or prior to the first day care begins.

Termination: A notice of **no less** than two weeks is required to terminate a contract by a parent or guardian. You must submit to the director in writing, your intent to withdrawal your child from the program. MP reserves the right to immediately end care for nonpayment; failure to respect staff, teachers, directors, supplies, the building & its grounds; behavior of the child, which is harmful to the physical or emotional well-being of the other children and/or staff; or failure to abide by MP Policies. If you terminate care without giving appropriate notice, you will be responsible for payment of the final 2 weeks of care, whether or not your child attends.

II. ABOUT THE PROGRAM

CURRICULUM

*As part of our curriculum, ALL our classes follow the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice. Please note that we are NOT accredited by the NAEYC, but we are members.

Infants

Children between the ages of 6 weeks and 18 months can attend our infant program. Our infant program is a full day program. We follow NY States ratios for four children to every one adult. In our infant room the goal of our staff is to nurture each individual child with personal care. The emphasis is on that child's development, focusing activities for that child around their age and developmental level. By keeping each child's day focused on their individual needs, schedules, and development we are able to create strong bonds, build quality relationships, and foster each infant's growth at their own pace. Our infant classroom is equipped with developmentally appropriate materials and equipment to enable the children to learn and grow.

Although most of our activities and interactions with the infants take place in their classroom, we also give the infants the opportunity to explore and move in bigger ways outside where climbing, crawling, jumping, walking, riding, and throwing balls and much more are encouraged. In addition, we have strollers to take the children for walks throughout the building and outside when appropriate to explore and learn about the world around them.

Toddlers

Children between the ages of 18 months and 36 months can attend this class. Class follows the states ratio for one teacher to every five children. Enrollment is limited to ten children. Our two-year-old program is a great program for children to play, learn, and grow in a structured environment. For most 2-year old's this is their first experience away from mom and dad. We understand that this can be a challenge at first, but we assure you that our wonderful and caring staff will be there with a smile and patience to reassure your child and help him/her gain independence. It is perfectly normal for children (and parents too!) to shed a few tears the first few weeks. Do not worry, they are safe and will eventually get the hang of it.

Our focus in this class is developing language, learning to make friends, and having fun. Children will learn to say please and thank you as well as manners. We will work on identifying colors, counting, and reciting the alphabet. Music is used as an important teaching tool in this class. It is easy to learn simple concepts when they are put to a catchy tune. Anything can be taught through music. At Mill Pond we believe that one of the best ways for children to learn is through play and hands on learning experience. It is through play that children develop language skills, learn to solve problems, to get along with others and to develop the fine and gross motor skills needed to grow and learn. We have a wide variety of play things available in our clean and bright classrooms. Our friendly staff will be right there playing along with your child and helping them gain knowledge and learn new skills. Throughout the year we will have many fun and exciting activities, and theme days for your child. A typical day in our Two's classroom includes play time, circle time (stories, games, music, etc.), arts and crafts, snack, and outdoor play.

Preschool/Pre-K

Toilet training is required. Class size follows NY States ratio of 1 teacher to 8 children for our 4 year olds and 1 teacher to 7 children for our 3 year olds. This class includes many fun activities such as: pumpkin picking on site in the fall, a walk to the mail box to mail a letter, holiday parties, theme days, as well as visits from people in the community who can teach us about their profession or culture. We will also have a moving up and graduation ceremony in June. A newsletter will be sent out monthly to let you know about all of the month's activities. We update our FB pages weekly with what the children have been doing. Please be sure to "LIKE" our FB pages.

We have carefully developed a curriculum for our preschool children that is play based and will give your child the tools he/she needs to learn and grow. At Mill Pond we truly believe that play is the best way for children to learn. It is our hope that we can develop in each child a positive self-image and a love of learning and going to school. Our preschool classes are designed to fully prepare your child for Kindergarten. We feel confident that through our curriculum your child will be more than ready for Kindergarten in the Three Village School district.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY – Language development is extremely important for young children. Every day we will have time set aside in group time for "show and tell", discussions about different subjects, flannel board stories, and most importantly, books. Parents are frequently encouraged to read to their child every day to ensure success in their child's schooling in the years to come. Children will learn to recognize their name as well as trace and write their name. Children will also spend time in small groups where they can interact and develop language skills with one or two other students and the teacher. In our 4 year old class the children will continue to work on handwriting by writing their name, letters of the alphabet, and shapes. All of our learning takes place in a hands-on, playful environment.

PLAY - Children are encouraged to participate in dramatic play. We have a wide variety of play things at our school including, blocks, trains, cars, and various props which promote dramatic play. This encourages children to express themselves, allows the imagination to surface, and encourages social interaction with their peers.

SOCIAL - Games and social activities in large and small groups happen often in the 3 year classroom. Games that are played in a group teach the children how to cooperate with one another, and learn to take turns. Children will be encouraged to use good manners, to be kind and respectful to other and themselves.

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT - Music is used as an important teaching tool in all our classes. It is easy to remember the rules at school when a song is sung to remind the children what to do next. Anything can be taught through music. We use music to teach the children many concepts including: numbers shapes, days of the week, and the months of the year. The children will learn basic music concepts such as a capella (singing without instruments) and solo (singing or playing an instrument alone). They will also be introduced to a few musical instruments and will have a chance to play them. Our preschool classes also put on a Holiday program where the children sing for their audience. Children love to perform for their family and friends.

ART - Art is used as a tool in teaching, as well as a fun way to play. Freedom with art supplies encourages using the imagination, is a good release of emotions, and helps the children to develop eye/hand coordination. Most of our art projects are open ended, allowing your child to explore and use 24 his/her imagination. Not all of our art activities produce a product. Sometimes art will include making a group project such as, painting ice with watercolors.

MATH AND SCIENCE - Math is taught through games. For example, counting how many crackers were eaten at snack time. Other math games include identifying shapes, measuring, sorting and comparisons, making patterns. The children will be introduced to science including meteorology, biology, chemistry and physics in very simple forms. Science experiments help children explore their surroundings in a hands-on way. We discuss bugs, animals, rocks, trees, flowers, weather, and much more. We will go on several nature walks and allow the children the opportunity to tell us about nature and science. Children always seem to enjoy finding out new information about these topics.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT - Physical Development is included daily and is so important for your child's development. Children will develop their gross motor skills through play on our playground. We go outside whenever possible and ask that during snowy weather you bring the appropriate clothing for your child to play in the snow. We have big balls for the children to use, tricycles, parachutes, soccer balls, basket balls, kick ball, and many other games for the children to get actively involved in their physical environment. We teach that exercise is an important part of being healthy. Fine motor skills are practiced daily through art, writing, pinching tweezers, grasping objects, etc.

PROGRAM PLACEMENT AND TRANSITIONS

Placement in our classes is based on both chronological age and developmental readiness.

Infants: This class is for children ages 6 weeks – 18 months. Once your child has reached 18 months old, they can move into our toddler class.

Toddlers: This class is for children ages 18-36 months. Once your child is 3 years old, they can transition into our preschool program. If your child is still 2 years old, they can move up to our 3-year-old class up to 3 months early if they show readiness in all areas (social, emotional, cognitive, physical). If your child is not ready to transition into our preschool class, State Regulation states that the child has 3 months before or after their birthday to transition into the Preschool class. We will do everything we can to ease this transition.

Preppers: This is a class we added at our Port Jeff Station location only. It is for children 2.5-3.5 years old who are in the potty-training stage. We do not potty train them for you, but we do assist you with the process.

Preschool: Our preschool classes are for children ages 3 – Pre-K. Your child can attend this class up until they enter Kindergarten. Children will be assigned to either a primarily 3 yr old room or a primarily 4 yr old room based on each individual child's developmental readiness.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The Head of Group for each classroom is responsible for planning and carrying out the daily activities in the classroom. The Head of Group is required to have at least one of the following. A. Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education or related field. B. Current CDA credential and 2 years of experience related to caring for children. In addition to this education, they will also be required to have at least 2 years of experience and must show the director that they are a capable early childhood educator. We look for staff members who are of the upmost quality and will not stand for less.

All Assistants to the Head of Group must hold a high school diploma or its equivalent or substantial experience working with children. They must be at least 18 years old.

Each staff member is required to provide 3 references which will be verified by the director.

In addition to the above requirements, staff will also be required to complete ongoing training. Staff must complete 30 hours of training every two years. Training must AT LEAST address the following topics:

- Principles of childhood development
- Nutrition and health needs of children
- Child day care program development
- Safety and security procedures
- Business record maintenance and management
- Child abuse and maltreatment identification and prevention
- Statutes and regulations pertaining to child care
- Statutes and regulations pertaining to child abuse and maltreatment
- Shaken Baby

The director will plan a training schedule with each staff member to ensure that the training requirements have been met.

Every staff member must be cleared through NYS OCFS fingerprinting, NYS Justice Center, and the NY State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Staff will never be left alone with the children until all the clearances have been verified.

All staff members must provide reference letters which are then verified by the director.

Substitutes:

In the event that a teacher calls out sick, injured, etc., it may become necessary to have substitutes in our classrooms in order to maintain adult to child ratios. Every effort will be made to limit the number of substitutes used. Our school is small and the children do tend to know everyone in the building. Substitutes who may be left alone with children will be cleared through NYS OCFS fingerprinting, NYS Justice Center, AND the NY State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment. All substitutes who will be in the classrooms on a regular basis must pass these clearances. On occasion we may have student interns or volunteers. They will not be required to undergo the same background check, but will also not be left alone with the children or counted in the staff/child ratio.

DIVERSITY

Mill Pond Nursery School is strongly committed to diversity, and enrolled families represent a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, languages, family structures, and socioeconomic statuses. We hope that this early foundation will teach the children to be accepting of people regardless of differences or, ideally, to be blinded to superficial differences.

We make every effort to incorporate diversity in the program through toys, books, music, food, etc. Families are encouraged to share with us a little about their culture and family dynamics upon enrolling at Mill Pond so that we can better serve your child. There will be several opportunities throughout the year for parents to volunteer and share with us a little about their family and culture.

Mill Pond does not discriminate against our children, our families, and our staff on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin.

Mill Pond admits children age 6 weeks – 12 years without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability. The program will attempt to accommodate children with special needs, consistent with the requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act, as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child.

When a parent/guardian states that a child has special needs, the Director and the parent/guardian will meet to review the child's care requirements. To help facility staff better understand individual special needs, parents/guardians will be asked to complete a Special Care Plan, in conjunction with their child's health care provider(s) Emergency Information Form. If the program is unable to accommodate the child's needs, as defined by the child's health care provider(s) or the Individual Family Service Plan / Individual Education Plan, without posing an undue burden defined by the ADA, the Director will work with the parent/guardian to find a suitable environment for their child.

SUPPLIES

Each teacher will send out a list of supplies needed.

All clothes, bottles, sippy cups, etc. must have your child's first and last name on them at all times. If supplies are not brought, they will be purchased for you and charged to your account. MPNS has the right to terminate care if supplies are not made available. Notice will be sent home when your child's supplies are low. We ask that your child does not bring any personal items from home (toys, i-pads, leap pads, etc.) other than what is requested unless asked by the office or classroom teacher. Mill Pond is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken items. If such items are brought in, they will be sent to the office and must be picked up by a parent.

GENERAL POLICIES

Clothing: Please send your child in clothes that you don't mind getting messy, are easily washable, comfortable, and easily manageable for your child when going to the bathroom. If your child is potty trained or in the process of being potty trained, no overalls please! We will make every effort to keep your child clean by using aprons and smocks, but **please don't send them in fancy clothes as we will often be doing messy activities.**

Please, NO jewelry. Jewelry is a major choking hazard and we ask that you remove all jewelry from your child prior to entering the school.

No scarves as they are a strangulation hazard outdoors.

Meals:

Please note: infants follow their own personalized schedule.

Parents are responsible for providing all food for their child. Morning snack will be served from 9:30 A.M.-10:30 A.M. Parents are responsible for providing their child's lunch (peanut free). Lunch will be served from 11:30 A.M.-12:45P.M. followed by an afternoon snack that will be served from 2:30 P.M.-4:00 P.M. If your child will arrive before 8 AM, you are required to bring their breakfast if needed. If they arrive after 8 am, they should already have been fed breakfast. Please note: times are approximate.

If you forget to bring lunch or a snack for your child, we will call you and either have you bring one in or provide them with a healthy meal. A fee of \$5 will be charged to your account for this meal should you consistently forget. For infants, you will be required to bring in your own food supplies. Meals & snacks are served Family-Style. Children are encouraged to use this time to share their experiences with each other. Manners are taught and practiced during this time as well. Please list on the registration form, any food allergies your child may have. If your child has an allergy, we will request permission from you to post their allergies for all who come in the classroom to be aware of. This will help to ensure that your child is never fed a food that they are allergic to. If your child is refusing to eat food that you provide for him/her, parents will be asked to bring in something different. Often children refuse to eat something at school that they usually eat at home. Please work with us to find something that suits your child at school.

Outdoor Play:

State regulations require that there be daily supervised outdoor play for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather.

You must bring appropriate clothing for the weather. During the winter months, please have hats and gloves in your child's cubby so that we are sure to have these during the cold winter months. On rainy days send in rain boots and rain coat as we often go for a walk in the rain or spend a few minutes on the playground. If your child is too ill for outdoor play, they are probably too ill to be at the school. We do not have extra staff to stay indoors with children who cannot go outside. Please refer to our health policy.

Field Trips:

Because Mill Pond does not provide transportation to any student, we will not be going to any field trips that require your child to be driven somewhere. For our pre-k aged children at our Stony Brook location, we may take 2 or 3 field trips throughout the year. One will be to Avalon, and the other to the Stony 30

Brook Post Office. We will not go unless we have adequate parent volunteers and staff to attend. All other activities will be brought to the school (example: Fire truck, pumpkin picking, etc.) Signed permission slips will be required for any field trip where we leave Mill Pond grounds.

Naptime:

NY State requires that we offer “rest time” for all children that stay for an extended amount of time. We read a story and play soothing music before our rest period. If your child resists napping, we offer a variety of quiet activities. Children will never be forced to rest for long periods of time. Cribs and cots are provided for all children.

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations:

Birthdays and holidays are an especially exciting time for young children, and we will be pleased to help your child celebrate with classmates and staff. This will be your child’s special day! Please discuss this with your child’s teacher prior to the date. We can provide you with a list of approved snacks as there may be children with allergies in your child’s class. We do not allow homemade treats because of the potential allergy risk. Although cupcakes, cakes, donuts, etc. are yummy, they are not healthy. At Mill Pond we try to teach the children the importance of making healthy choices and taking care of our bodies. Please consider bringing in a healthy snack or instead, come and read a book to your child’s class. Since licensing regulations prohibit any type of open flame in the center, birthday candles are not permitted.

Toys from Home:

We ask that you keep toys from home at home. Please explain to your child that it is difficult for our teachers to keep track of every child’s toys. We understand that sometimes children do not want to let go of certain toys. We don’t want anyone to get upset and have a bad day so we will do our best to remind your child to put the toy in his/her backpack or cubby when they are ready to let go. Please understand that we are not responsible if the toy gets lost. If the toy becomes a distraction or source of contention in our class, we will ask your child to immediately put the toy away.

III. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Our #1 priority is to keep your child safe. Copies of our State approved “Health Care Plan” as well as our “Emergency Plan” are available from the director upon request. Our “Emergency Plan” is also posted in each classroom.

ILLNESS

Mill Pond is a “Mildly Ill” center. Children who have mild illnesses (such as a cold) that do not interfere with their day can still attend. Please remember that the other children in care are exposed to any disease your child may bring into the center. If you are unable to remain home with your child, it is your responsibility to make substitute childcare arrangements. Obviously, it is not possible to prevent the spread of all illness however minimizing exposure & providing good hygienic practices in the center & home are means by which we can limit the problem & the resulting inconvenience. Accordingly, for the benefit of all involved, the following policies will be strictly enforced.

Children who have exhibited ANY symptoms of infectious illness within the 24-hour period are likely to be contagious & should remain at home. Examples of associated symptoms included, but are not limited to, fever of 100F, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing, yellow or green drainage from nose, drainage from eyes or ears, rash or head lice. MPNS reserves the right to determine whether a child should remain at home or is okay to stay or return to the center when illness is a consideration. A doctor’s note with permission to return to daycare may be requested. Parents of children who become ill during the day will be promptly notified & are expected to make arrangements for their child to be picked up immediately. The sick child will, if possible, be isolated from the other children in the center to minimize exposure. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the person designated as the emergency contact will be notified.

It is the parent’s responsibility to inform the director if their child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness so proper notifications can be made. Notice will be posted on the parent information board as well as classroom doors informing parents that their child may have been exposed to a contagious illness/disease. For confidentiality reasons, the name of the child with the confirmed illness will not be released.

Any illness on NYS websites list of “Communicable Diseases” will be reported via email or REMIND app to parents of all enrolled children in/out of attendance the reported day. A complete list of these illnesses can be found at: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/>

Common colds and allergies should not, unless causing the child to feel too uncomfortable, prohibit attendance. It is our policy to have conditions that encourage cleanliness and good health practices among both staff and children.

Mill Pond employees will follow the same guidelines for exclusion as stated for children. All staff is to report illness to the director to ensure proper notifications can be made.

GENERAL HEALTH POLICIES

Medication Administration: We have some staff members who are MAT certified and can administer medication to your child if needed. Your child's doctor must fill out the appropriate forms in order for us to administer any prescription or oral medications of any kind. Please see the Director for these forms.

First Aid Kit: All first aid supplies are kept on site and stored in an area that is out of reach of children. Mill Pond stores their first aid kits in the following places: The women's bathroom on the top shelf on the left side, as you walk in the door, and the infant room on the top shelf, left side. The following first aid supplies are always available: fever thermometer, cold pack, band-aids, roller gauze, sterile gauze pads, bandage tape, and latex gloves.

Latex Gloves: Currently, we use vinyl gloves. However, please be sure to inform the Director if your child has a latex allergy in case we are unable to get non-latex gloves.

CPR/First Aid: NY State requires that at least one staff member who is CPR/First Aid certified must always be on duty. At Mill Pond we require ALL staff members to be First Aid/CPR certified. When a new staff member starts it may be up to 6 months before this training is completed.

Immunization and Medical Statement Policy: Mill Pond requires all children to have immunizations and a copy kept on file upon admission. Parents are responsible for providing an updated copy of child's immunization record each time they receive new shots. These may be emailed to us @ info@MillPondSchool.org or handed to the director. In addition to an immunization record, you will be required to turn in a medical statement filled out by your child's doctor upon admission. The forms for both immunization and Medical Statement can be obtained from the Director.

Child Allergy Policy: If your child has a food or environmental allergy Mill Pond will work with your family to develop an individualized action plan specific to your child and the severity of the allergy. This will be done at the time of enrollment or at the onset of new allergy.

GENERAL SAFETY POLICIES

Bad Weather Policy: Staff must use good judgment on days when the temperature is very high or very low, or the wind chill is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (example: shortened outside time). We follow the weather guidelines posted on the parent information board in the hallway.

Cold/Snow: Children must be properly dressed to go outside in cold weather. Coats, hats, & mittens/gloves must be worn at all times when the temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. In the snow your child must wear snow pants/suit, waterproof boots & gloves, a jacket, and a hat. You must provide these items or we may call to have you bring them or to pick up your child. **We are required by NY State Regulation to go outside daily so every child must be dressed properly.**

Heat: If the heat index is excessively high, staff will shorten or eliminate outside time. This includes heat and humidity factors. On these days, it is best for outside time to occur prior to 11:00 am. With written permission, sunscreen will be placed on all children before going outside by a staff member when there is direct sun.

Lightning/Severe Weather: At the first sign of threatening weather or lightning, staff will bring all children indoors into a safe area. Staff will need to monitor the situation.

Fire: There are multiple fire extinguishers located throughout the center. The entire building is equipped with fire alarms. If there is a fire the children will be immediately evacuated from the building and 911 notified. We will practice monthly fire drills so the children will be prepared in the event of a fire. The fire evacuation plan is posted in each classroom, including the kitchen.

Emergency Shelter in Place: In the event of an emergency or a lockdown in which no one can leave or enter the center, we have a sufficient supply of non-perishable food, water, diapers and infant formula, emergency blankets, flashlights, etc. Staff members are trained in keeping children calm with games, activities, music, coloring, and stories. After the proper authorities have been contacted, parents will be notified via a phone call. If we cannot reach you, your emergency contacts will be called. Twice a year we conduct "Shelter in Place" drills. A letter will be sent home to you when we do these.

Relocation Sites: In the event that we need to evacuate the school and the school grounds, we will head to one of our relocation sites. Please see our Emergency Plan located in each classroom for a list of relocation sites.

After the proper authorities have been notified, parents will be notified via a phone call. Emergency contacts will be called if we cannot reach you. You will be notified of our location and expected to pick your child up if it is safe to do so.

If we have to relocate, we will bring with us emergency supplies (emergency contact forms, first aid kits, water, formula, etc.

Power Outage: There are flashlights located in all classrooms. If the power remains out for some time, there are non-perishables located in the kitchen that will be used to eat & drink. If the weather is inclement, and the center is getting too cold for the children, parents will be called to pick-up their child. If power is out before opening the center, Mill Pond reserves the right to close the center until power is restored.

Injuries: Although supervision is constantly given, our staff cannot always be by the child's side to prevent falls, tripping, bumps, blows from the other children, etc. If the child is injured in a nonthreatening way, Mill Pond staff will assess the child and provide necessary first aid. You will be notified upon pickup or you may receive a phone call if necessary. If immediate intervention is required or serious injury has occurred, a staff member will take appropriate action including calling 911 & having your child transported to the hospital if necessary. You or your family's insurance will be responsible for the cost of medical help or treatment due to accidents or illness while in childcare. Mill Pond does not provide health insurance for enrolled children. If serious injury or death of a child occur at our center NYS OCFS will be notified.

CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT

While Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare provides a safe environment for children, other types of harm may come to a child despite our best precautions. In particular, the abuse or neglect of a child is of paramount concern. To this end, all staff are required to read and sign all policies relating to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse. All employees are considered Mandated Reporters (see below for a description of a Mandated Reporter). Upon employment at Mill Pond, ALL employees must complete Child Abuse and Maltreatment Mandated Reported Training.

***When left unattended in a motor vehicle, children are at risk for bodily harm or death due to factors including extreme hot and cold temperatures, kidnapping, and tampering with the vehicle's gear setting or ignition. Please do not leave your child unattended in your car! Thanks for your cooperation.**

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Maltreatment:

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. ALL EMPLOYEES of Mill Pond are considered mandated reporters in this context.

In New York, The New York State Office of Children and Family Services maintains a Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment for reports made pursuant to the Social Services Law. The Central Register, also known as the "**Hotline**", receives telephone calls alleging child abuse or maltreatment within New York State. The Central Register relays information from the calls to the local Child Protective Service for investigation, monitors their prompt response, and identifies if there are prior child abuse or maltreatment reports.

The **Hotline** receives calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week from two sources: persons who are required by law, or mandated, to report suspected cases of child abuse and maltreatment; and calls from non-mandated reporters, including the public. Among those who are mandated to make reports are:

- medical and hospital personnel
- school officials
- social service workers
- childcare workers
- residential care workers and volunteers, and
- law enforcement personnel

*For a complete list of mandated reporters, contact the SCR directly. The number is below.

In accordance with the provisions of sections 413 and 415 of the Social Services Law, child day care center staff must report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment concerning a child receiving child day care to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, or cause such a report to be made, when such staff have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their capacity as child day care center workers is an abused or maltreated child. This must be done in the following manner:

- Immediately report to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment by telephone, followed by a written report within 48 hours on form #LDSS-2221A, to Suffolk County CPS.

The telephone number for the **SCR Reporting Hotline is 1-800-342-3720.**

Immunity From Civil or Criminal Liability:

Any person who reports abuse or neglect, pursuant to the law, or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. As mandated reporters, employees of Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are ultimately determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith.”

Penalty for Failure to Report:

Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect, pursuant to the law or to comply with the provisions of the law, may be subject to a fine of up to \$500.00, up to six months’ imprisonment, or both.

Procedure for a child who is the subject of a CPS referral:

When a child at our facility is the subject of a CPS referral, MPNS and its staff will fully cooperate with any investigation. A daily log will be kept on forms provided indicating the child’s general health and any signs of abuse. Staff will be trained on any additional precautions that must be taken with the child.

Procedure if one of the staff are accused of the abuse:

If a Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare staff member, or the Director, is accused of abuse and/or neglect by a parent or co-worker and a report has been made to CPS, Mill Pond will cooperate with any CPS and/or NYS OCFS investigation. In addition, the accused staff member will be informed of the allegations and be given an opportunity to respond to those allegations. The staff member’s employment may be suspended until the investigation by CPS and NYS OCFS is complete. If a staff member is not suspended, they will be supervised at all times. Termination of employment after a child abuse allegation is at the discretion of the Director in conjunction with the investigation results from local authorities. In the event that the Director is the accused person, and the Director is also in a lead teacher or assistant teacher position, the Director will immediately remove herself from that teaching position and will no longer be permitted to be alone with the children until the CPS investigation is completed. The Office of Children and Family Services will determine whether the Director can continue in that position.

IV. OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

We are committed to providing high-quality childcare to your child and family. Your satisfaction is of great importance to us. We understand that this handbook may not cover every issue that will arise in our center, which is why open communication is so important. If at any point you have a comment or an issue with something that may or may not be in this handbook, please speak to the director or your child's teacher.

OBSERVATION OF PROGRAM

Mill Pond is licensed by the NY State Office of Children and Family Services. Our license # is 682327 at our Stony Brook location and #789556 at our Port Jefferson Station location.

As a licensed day care we are required to follow certain rules and regulations. A copy of these rules and regulations are in each classroom. A copy of our current license from NYS OCFS is posted by the entrance of the building. The Office of Children and Family Services sends out Licensing Specialists unannounced to check in on licensed day cares in order to ensure that they are fulfilling their licensing agreement and following all applicable rules and regulations. In addition, the Director will observe and direct the day to day operation of Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare to ensure that the staff carry out their duties and to ensure the safety of all the children enrolled in the center.

Other observers who may visit our center include:

- CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)
- Suffolk Child Care Council (CCC)
- Parents
- Students (practicum, etc.)
- Other accrediting agencies
- CPS

No observers, volunteers, parents, etc., will be left alone with the children without completing the appropriate background checks required by our licensing agreement.

PARENT TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parental involvement is an especially important part of our program. Parents and children working together with staff members is an important element in a quality childcare program. We have an “open door policy”. Visitation is welcome by parents who wish to visit the site. A solid relationship with the staff, built on mutual trust and respect, is key in making your childcare arrangement work well for everyone.

Keep these tips in mind as you begin to build your relationship:

- Always keep the lines of communication open. Let your teacher or directors know if there is something going on in your child’s life that may be affecting behavior.
- Be aware of program policies and honor them. Respect drop-off and pick-up times.
- Get involved with the program. The more you participate, the more dedicated you will feel.

There are bound to be certain topics or situations that are difficult to talk about with Mill Pond employees. If you have developed an honest, open way of communicating with one another, discussing these issues as they arise will not be as difficult. Things to consider when discussing difficult issues:

- Raise issues when they first develop. If you put off a discussion, it may be harder to bring it up later.
- Do not confront Mill Pond employees in front of other parents or children. Set up a time with the director or teacher to speak privately, in person, or over the phone.
- Think about what you want to discuss ahead of time, and even practice how you want to say it.
- Be specific about your concerns. Give examples of things that have happened or observations you have made.
- Never discuss a problem when you are feeling angry or not in control of your emotions.
- Remember that conflicts are normal and part of most relationships. They can usually be resolved when both parties can see the other’s views and are willing to compromise.

To keep our commitment, we need your help throughout the year!

- Help us “stay in tune” with your needs and interests!
- Tell us about your day when you pick up your child.
- Help us learn about your child’s special talents and strengths.
- Tell us when your child needs extra help or support.
- Keep us informed about any important changes we need to know about in order to serve you well.
- Let us know about your family and cultural traditions.
- Make suggestions when you think we could serve you better. There is a mailbox to the left when you first walk in the door if you would like to make a confidential suggestion please do so.
- Ask questions if you do not understand our policies or procedures.
- Tell us the best ways for you to connect with your child’s experience in our program.
- Visit whenever you can – You are always welcome!!

We want to build positive relationships with all of our families....help us achieve this goal!

Exchanging Information:

The list below indicates strategies which Mill Pond feels are helpful in communicating.

- A parent bulletin board is posted outside each room with reminders, policies, and general information specific to your child's classroom.
- BRIGHTWHEEL App is the primary tool we use. Please download the app and turn on notifications.
- Talk to your child's teacher each day at drop off and pick up times.

Parent Teacher Conferences:

Mill Pond will hold "Parent-Teacher Conferences" at least once yearly. You may request a conference with your child's teacher or the Director and any point throughout the year. If you do not wish to attend the conference you may indicate so in writing to the Director.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We assure you that all records, including, but not limited to financial records, educational and health records are completely confidential. Your family's information is not shared with anyone other than staff (who are bound by a confidentiality agreement) and other authorized state agencies when necessary. Your signed permission is required to release information to anyone else.

Photographs/Publicity/Social Media:

Upon enrolling your child at Mill Pond you will be asked to sign an agreement allowing us to use your child's picture to promote Mill Pond. These photos may be used on our website, newsletters, bulletin boards, flyers, or Facebook page. If you did not sign the agreement, your child's photo will not be used. Parents and staff are prohibited from taking photos on their cell phones of any child other than their own unless they have permission from the other child/children's parent or guardian in writing. Staff are prohibited from posting any photos of any child enrolled at the center on their personal FB or social media page.

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents:

Mailings, conferences, emergency contacts and authorizations used in case of accidents will be as directed by the custodial parent. All parents are encouraged to attend conferences and other functions, but it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to inform the non-custodial parent of such arrangements. Without an official custody order or restraining order on file, Mill Pond legally must grant both parents access to the child and all records.

Family Information:

It is the responsibility of parents to notify the Directors of any changes in employment, address, phone numbers, care and/or custody arrangements, and any other important information regarding the child or family situation. All changes must be completed in writing and submitted to the office. When parents are divorced, we MUST have copies of the court ordered custody arrangement.

V. OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES

TOILETING POLICY

Learning to use the toilet is a big event in a young child's life. Because toilet training is a complex process, there are many issues caregivers and families must consider before and during the process of toilet training for it to be a successful experience for everyone.

It is the belief of Mill Pond that potty training or toilet learning should begin at home with the child's parents or caregivers and at a time when there are not a lot of changes in the child's life. Life must be fairly stress free during this time for the child. We will assist your child in potty training once the signs of readiness have been observed by the parents as well as our staff.

It is encouraged that the first steps towards potty training begin at home and on a weekend when parents can devote your weekend to helping your child. When your child is successful for a full weekend, your child then can attend childcare in underwear. Please notify the provider that morning that your child has underwear on and not a diaper or Pull-up as to minimize any surprises! At that time, the provider will gently remind your child from time to time (not on any set schedule) to remember to go and use the potty. Please remember it is nearly impossible to remember to remind each child to use the potty every half to hour. For that reason, your child needs to be able to communicate the need to go potty his or herself without reminders from an adult. There are times in the daily schedule where I do remind the children to go in and go but again it is not on a set time or schedule – the reminders come naturally throughout the day such as after breakfast, lunch or after naptime.

During this time, we request that the following guidelines are followed:

1. Your child wear clothing that is easy for the child to pull up or down.
2. NO overalls, pants that require the use of a belt, t-shirts with snaps between the legs or dresses (girls cannot see to pull down their underwear) be worn.
3. A supply of clothing with NO LESS than 3 changes of clothing including socks be kept at the center in case of accidents every day.
4. Bring an extra pair of shoes if available.
5. 5 to 6 pairs of training pants (the thick 5-layer underwear)
6. If your child is male, inform the caregiver if your son will be sitting or standing. This really should be determined right from the beginning of the potty-training process. It is recommended that boys first learn to sit and pee in the potty and once they are consistent then can be taught to stand and go. This will also lessen problems with learning to put BM's in the toilet and will also avoid constipation issues.
7. Keep a small supply of Pull-ups available at childcare until the child has shown naptime dryness for a week.
8. Mill Pond DOES NOT rinse out or wash any soiled clothing so any clothing that becomes soiled during the day will need to go home that afternoon.

Please keep in mind that often children will show a readiness and have success for potty training at home before the signs are seen at childcare. There may be a period of time where your child is potty trained at home and not at childcare. That is perfectly normal and has been seen quite often! If your child comes to child care with underwear on and has 2 accidents within a short period of time, we will put a diaper or Pull-Up on your child and we can try again the next day or when he or she shows signs of

being ready at child care. We cannot emphasize enough that patience is the key thing here! Potty training occurs for all children sometime in their life – there is no right or wrong age!

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Mill Pond will set age appropriate, consistent limits and clearly communicate the rules of the classrooms. Our goal is to provide an environment that gives children the opportunity to learn, explore and succeed with the use of praise and positive reinforcement to minimize negative behavior.

Our staff is trained to be consistent and nurturing towards each child and to ALWAYS respect each child's individual feelings and experiences. Reasonable expectations help to keep conflicts to a minimum. Action is rarely required when children are kept in a stimulated, nurturing, and creative environment.

We will not permit or tolerate the use of any corporal punishment such as spanking, biting, shaking, slapping, twisting, squeezing, yelling, hitting, spanking, slapping, shaking, pinching, using profanity, withholding food or sleep, ridicule, embarrassment or humiliation of any child.

Mill Pond is committed to providing a safe, happy, and nurturing environment for the children in our care. Our goal is to help each child grow to his or her potential, and participate in our community at Mill Pond, and, ultimately, in the community overall. As with any community, large or small, rules are necessary to ensure smooth functioning and to reduce conflict. With children, it can be difficult to enforce these rules without appropriate strategies of behavior management to create a sense of discipline.

What is behavior management? The ongoing process of helping children to develop self-control for self-management while protecting and maintaining the integrity of the child.

Behavior Management Strategies:

In circumstances where behavior modification is necessary, positive techniques of guidance are used, including redirection, encouragement, and positive reinforcement, rather than competition, comparison, and criticism. Age-appropriate expectations and guidelines are used to minimize the need for behavior modification. Any behavior modification is related to the child's action and is handled without prolonged delay.

The following are the guidelines that we give our staff when training them on proper behavior management in the classroom:

1. **Develop appropriate limits** that protect children's health and safety, teach self-control, and are meaningful. Limits should be stated firmly, positively, and with respect. Some teachers have basic rule: You may not hurt yourself, others, or things.
2. **Be clear about rules.** Consistent and fair rules help children control their own behavior. Rules should be kept simple, few in number, truly necessary, and reasonable for the age of the child. Reasons for the rules and limits should be given. Communicate your expectations clearly.
3. **Ignore minor misbehavior.** Some children misbehave because they are seeking attention. Find out why a misbehaving child is seeking attention. Encourage the child to voice feelings. Encourage a more acceptable behavior. This strategy takes time before results are felt, but the result is well worth the effort and time.
4. **Distract or redirect children from potential problems.** Be ready to step in to shift a child's attention or add a new activity to divert a problem before it gets out of control. Change

- something about the problem situation. If a child is yelling, whisper something in his/her ear. If two children are fighting over a toy, offer another type. Ask the children to visit the “peace table or area” to talk over issues and come up with a resolution to their conflict.
5. **Use suggestions phrased as a request or question whenever possible.** Get the child to actively consider alternatives to the behavior. “Instead of hitting your friend when she takes your shovel, what could you do?”
 6. **Use “no choice” statements when you expect a child to do something.** “When you clean up your area, we will be ready to go outside.”
 7. **Make “I” statements** to children which focuses on the behavior and consequences, leaving out blame.
 - Describe the behavior. “When you walked off by yourself...”
 - State your concerns about the consequence the behavior produced in you. “I was so worried that something happened to you because I did not know where you were.”
 8. **Deliver logical consequences.** Give the child a choice, then accept the choice and communicate your acceptance. An example: While on the playground, a child takes off his shoes and gets up to play. You can say, “You can either put your shoes on and play with your friends, or you may sit here so you won’t hurt your feet.” If the child chooses to sit, then say, “I see you want to sit. Please make sure you don’t get up without your shoes on.”
 9. **Remove the child from the group only when necessary.** When a child continues to make unwise choices and refuses to follow directions after all other guidance techniques have been attempted, ask child to choose a quiet toy and play at the table. The child may also choose to go to a quiet area to regain control. Explain to the child that when he/she has gained self-control, he/she may return to the group. Allow the child to decide when he/she is ready to return to play. When a child asks to return to play, ask 3 questions:
 - “Do you know why I asked you to take a break?”
 - “What were you doing?” (“Throwing blocks.”)
 - “What are you going to do now?” (“Build with the blocks.”) When the child answers the questions, say to the child, “I see that you understand why you were taking a break and that you know what you should be doing. I am going to trust that you will play appropriately now.”
 10. **Remove the child from the environment only when necessary.** When a child is hurting him- or herself, others, or things and cannot be redirected, call the Director for additional help and intervention. The administrator will decide if the child needs to be removed from the room for a short period, always with an adult.
 11. **Sending the child home for inappropriate behavior or releasing the child from MP.** Only the Director can make the decision to send a child home or release the child from the School.

BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

We believe that parents/guardians have the utmost responsibility to work with our staff to ensure that growth and learning at home corresponds with what happens at school. As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure that all our children are in a safe environment, where they can learn and be cared for, without unnecessary disruptions of aggressive behaviors.

In the event we observe repeated aggression and/or disruption from your child, which you will be made aware of via incident reports and/or parent meetings, the Director and/or your child's teacher will meet with the parent/guardians to discuss the probationary period.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

A two-week probationary period will be enacted if:

- The child repeatedly causes harm to others, themselves, or the school environment
- The child causes a level of disruption that affects the education of their classmates
- The child's behavior requires removal from the classroom
- The child's behaviors or actions are causing the teacher to provide more one-on-one care/supervision and attention than our program is setup to accommodate

During this two-week probationary period, it is our expectation that you, as the parent, will address, and correct, your child's behaviors in partnership with our teachers and staff. In many cases this will require contacting your child's school district to setup an evaluation of your child so that they can determine if your child needs special serviced to help them thrive in school.

DISMISSAL FROM OUR SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

If the probationary period is not deemed successful and the behaviors cannot be accommodated, your child will be dismissed from our program effective at the end of the two-week probationary period.

Our environment and resources are not conducive to one-on-one supervision and education, therefore if at any time, we deem that the environment is unsafe or extremely disruptive for our staff and students, it will require dismissal.

By signing below, I acknowledge and understand the behavior contract procedures and agree to the terms of the contract.

BITING

A child biting another child is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in group childcare. It can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the parents, and the caregivers involved. For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings. For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. No matter what the cause, biting in a group situation causes strong feelings with all involved. It does help, however, to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur. The staff of Mill Pond, after consulting child care experts and manuals, has developed the following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in any of our rooms.

When a child is bitten:

For the biter:

1. The biter is immediately removed from the situation and the caring attention is focused on the child who was bit. Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter.
2. The biter is not allowed to return to the play and is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. We don't put our teeth on people. Or "That hurts Johnny when you bite him, he is sad."
3. Redirect the child to other play.
4. Write an incident/behavior report and notify the parents of the biter.

For the child who was bit:

1. Separate he/she from the biter.
2. Comfort the child.
3. Administer first aid as needed.
4. Write an accident report and notify parents (in writing or phone call if necessary) without using the name of the biter.

If biting continues:

1. Room staff meet with the director on a routine basis for advise, support and strategy planning.

2. Chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. Let all parents know that there is a problem and the procedures that will be followed to deal with it.
4. Head off biting situations before they occur. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior. Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
5. Work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.
6. Hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
7. Consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.
8. Prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from Mill Pond and help them to make contingency plans.
9. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, center, and other children, termination of the child from Mill Pond enrollment for the duration of the biting stage may occur. Written warning will be given to the parents before this action will be taken.

Family Acknowledgement of Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Policies

To ensure that you, the parent, have read & agree to the Policies of Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc., you must complete, sign, & return the following form to the office at the time of enrollment. A copy for your records will be made available upon request.

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Policy and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare COVID-19 Policies and Procedures. I understand that these new policies supersede previous policies and procedures found in the handbook for the time being. I will contact the director immediately with any questions and concerns _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Payment Policy and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Health and Safety Policies and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Enrollment /Termination Policy and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Behavior Management Policy/Behavior Contract as well as our Biting Policies and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I have received and read the Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. Inclement Weather/Emergency Closing Policy and agree with its terms. I will contact the director immediately with any questions or concerns. _____ (Please Initial)

I, _____ and _____ have read and understand all Policies & Guidelines of Mill Pond Nursery School. I/We agree to abide by all policies stated in the Parent Handbook.

I/We understand that we will be notified, in writing, of any changes in these policies. Any complaints, concerns, or grievances against Mill Pond Nursery & Childcare, Inc. will be made in writing and/or telephone call and will be followed up in a timely manner. I/We also understand that any breach of policies & contracts may be grounds to terminate childcare. A two-week notice will be given in such circumstances unless the infraction is severe enough to warrant termination without notice. This arrangement will come into effect on _____.

*Please complete this form and turn into the office at time of enrollment.

Parent Signature & Date _____

Parent Signature & Date _____

Director's Signature & Date _____