

Guidelines for Returning to Good Shepherd School

We intend to continue following CDC Guidelines, tailored to our organization as much as possible. We have adopted proactive measures specifically intended to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard children, families, and Good Shepherd School staff. They have been periodically reviewed with the Hamilton County Health Department and local medical professionals and adjusted throughout the year.

We will not be following the Hamilton County School schedule. While some of our breaks may fall within their calendar, determining if school closes for the virus or any other reason is made independently at GSS. If the Hamilton County or Lookout Mountain Governments or the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee invoke Stay at Home Orders, we would have to close. Otherwise, we intend to monitor things very closely, continue following our protocols and stay the course as we have since June of 2020. As you probably know, the Delta variant is proving to be much more transmissible than the original strain. It is also impacting children much more. As a result, we are remaining vigilant in hopes of keeping the students, staff and visitors at GSS safe. We follow and always have followed many of these protocols already. We continue to hope that gives us an advantage in doing this well.

1. Limiting Access to the Building:

- The building will remain locked throughout the day for both security and health & safety reasons.
- The doors will be unlocked from 7:45-9:30 am for school arrivals and 3:30-5:30 for school pick-ups.
- If you need to drop off or pick up a child at other times, simply call the office, message your teacher or ring the doorbell.

2. Pick-up and Drop-Off Protocols

We are using hybrid protocols for this school year. We will continue carpools at 7:30am, noon, 2:00 and 5:45 pm. Teachers will be outside with sign-in sheets and will greet the children. Signing in and out will occur at Drop off and Pick up. If you bring your child into the building, you need to sign them in their classroom. There will be hand hygiene stations set up at the entrance of the facility for use, when needed. Please remember to wear your masks and have masks on your children when you are inside the building.

3. Screening

We are no longer taking temperatures at the door. However, we do keep thermometers in each room. If a child feels warm, we will take their temperature and contact you if it's above 100.4. Please be on the alert for any of the symptoms of COVID-19 in your children and be sure to keep them home when they are sick and check with your family physician. Staff all tested negative before reopening. Should a staff member have symptoms of COVID-19 or have direct exposure to someone with COVID-19, they must be quarantined for 5 days. If they travel on an airplane or go out of town for more than two days, they must be retested before returning to work. Staff are required to report any illness to their supervisor, and they are required to notify their supervisor if anyone in their household tests positive for COVID-19. Likewise, GSS families should follow the same protocols with their children and report any COVID-19 positive cases in their household to the Director or Assistant Director. If a staff member is not vaccinated, they are required to test each week.

4. Class Size

We have returned to our normal class size for Fall 2021. As a licensed facility, class sizes are limited to maintain high quality ratios. We will limit the mixing of children by staggering playground times and keeping groups separate for all activities. We plan to continue Music and Godly Play in the Sanctuary or Talbird Hall in order to maintain social distancing and airflow in the Fall. If the numbers allow us to relax, we will return to the Music Room and the Godly Play classrooms in the Fall of 2021 or possibly the Spring 2022. We have returned to Chapel in the Sanctuary.

5. Face Masks

When feasible, staff members and older children (2, 3, 4, and 5-year-olds) should wear face coverings within the facility as recommended by the CDC. Cloth face coverings will NOT be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation. Please consider explanations to assist children with understanding why they will be wearing face coverings as well as why their teachers will be wearing them. We would like to ease the two-year-old's into wearing facemasks. Please begin working with them (and all Three, Four and Five-year old's) immediately and be sure to send them to school in a mask each day they attend. With Twos, we understand it may take time and the teachers will work with them each day for periods of time to make sure they wear them. Please be sure to send your child in a mask each day. We recommend you send multiple masks, so teachers can change them if they get dirty. All masks will be sent home each day to be washed and returned the next day. The disposable masks don't work very well on children. They don't fit as well, and they are easily broken. Please find some good fitting cloth masks. (see FAQ sheet) All masks should be provided from home and washed each night before they return to school the next day. It is noteworthy to report we have had no issues with facemasks on the children throughout the year. Even the two-year-olds have worn them beautifully. I am convinced the parents have done a great job introducing the concept and giving them time to practice before returning to school. It's had a very positive impact on their ability to wear them comfortably to school each day.

6. Under no circumstances will sick children be cared for in the facility

As always, if a child becomes sick while at school, the parent or guardian is contacted. Now, more than ever, we expect you to pick up your child immediately. Your child will be separated from other children at school and should be picked up in the school offices. Be sure to give your updated, accurate emergency contact information to your teachers.

7. If a child or staff member gets sick

We have a comprehensive list of cleaning and disinfecting protocols from the CDC should anyone within our facility get sick. They are the same ones we use for any contagious illnesses when they are present in our school. If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member, we have an additional list of cleaning protocols that immediately go into place. It includes additional cleaning and disinfecting in the classroom and any/all common areas used by the infected person. In that case, the parents will be notified immediately via See Saw. If an exposure occurred at school, the children and adults in that room will need to consult with their physician about testing and/or quarantine. The room affected will need to be closed for 24 hours while it is being completely cleaned and sanitized. In addition, the child or staff member will not be permitted to return to the facility until they have completed the recommended testing and/or quarantine. (This varies depending on whether or not you opt for testing and the presence of symptoms or not. If there is an exposure within your household. The GSS student must complete a 5-day quarantine and then an additional 5 days (with a negative test.

8. Social Distancing

Teachers will prepare their rooms for the Fall/Winter Program by marking the common areas of the rooms, as well as the Circle Time Rug and all tables with 3-foot increment markers to help the children maintain a safe "Social Distance". We are also realistic. While we will do everything in our power to assist the children with maintaining the 3' distance, we also know they are toddlers and very young children, and we can all imagine the scenarios where that distance between them may be breached. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that a distance of 3' with preschoolers should be very effective in preventing the spread of the disease. In addition, we will continue to follow the protocols in place on cleaning and disinfecting toys and bedding, all hard surfaces, and hand washing throughout the day. Those are not new to licensed daycare facilities.

9. Talking with children about COVID-19 and returning to school

Please continue talking with your children about this virus and some of the changes they are likely to notice upon returning to school. As is always the case, they will take their lead from you. If they've seen people in masks and worn masks themselves, that may not seem new to them at all.

We often talk about the 3-week rule at the beginning of school. It takes a person 3 weeks to develop a new habit. Returning to school after a long break will likely be challenging for some. It is part of what we do and fully understand it's in play as we start back to school. Assure them they are safe at school, and you are returning to get them. Always encourage them to have fun!

10. Possible Closure & Tuition

While it seems unlikely we will need to close school, if things get crazy and numbers start skyrocketing for reasons we can't know currently, we will adopt the following: **If there is a major change that necessitates the school's closing, for the first 30 days, we will expect tuition to be paid as always.** In the event the closing exceeds 30 days, GSS will operate as follows:

- Pre-K & Fours & Threes Classes will be offered online interaction/virtual learning for 1 hour each morning. In addition, teachers will send home learning packets. (either physically or via electronic communication, if needed)
- For all other classes, GSS Teachers will provide learning packets to be used with the children at home. Teachers will check in with parents to see if they'd like to do some online interaction and/or learning.
- If school is closed more than 30 days, we will invoice for the number of days you attend at the 9-2 rate, discounted 50%. We will not invoice for Extended Care.

11. Compliance

We are responsible for the health and safety of all the children and staff at GSS and will not compromise that for any reason. With the increasing information we are gaining on this virus and the advent of the vaccine, we will continue to review our policies while consulting with the local medical community and relax them if possible. Until that time, please follow them closely. These are not suggestions. If you don't feel you can follow them as presented, please consider withdrawing your child from school until you can. If you'd like to hold your spot until you feel comfortable sending your child back to school, you need only send in your tuition payment each month. We are all looking forward to vaccines for the youngest, most vulnerable people, which make up the entire student body of GSS.

I understand this is a challenging and somewhat frightening time for everyone. I encourage all of you to support each other in staying as safe as possible outside of the school environment. The health and safety of everyone at Good Shepherd School also relies on your habits outside of school. Our hope is to continue moving forward with the protocols and success we have seen thus far, remaining open and serving the Good Shepherd School families. I will do everything possible to keep you informed with as much notice as possible about any changes.

We look forward to another healthy happy school year!