



JEREMIAH
S C H O O L

JOHNSON CITY, TN

**Student and Parent
Handbook**

2023-24

2022-23 Jeremiah School Student and Parent Handbook

We welcome you to the Jeremiah School Family! This handbook is designed to help our students and parents understand the policies and procedures of Jeremiah School. We encourage you to read it carefully and call the school if you have any questions. While we hope this handbook is informative and useful, it is important to note that it is not meant to be a contract between Jeremiah School and the student or parent. As we are a relatively new and growing school that operates in an ever-changing world, it isn't possible for this handbook to contain every possible topic. Additions and revisions of practices or policies will be shared via email during the year when necessary. Jeremiah School is not answerable to, nor bound by, the provisions of any school district. It is a school of choice and students are expected to maintain appropriate attendance, academic, and behavioral standards to remain at Jeremiah School.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

MISSION STATEMENT: Jeremiah School is a faith-based school for students on the autism spectrum. We provide a safe, therapeutic, and educational environment where students develop the skills to build positive relationships and reach their greatest potential.

VISION STATEMENT: Our vision is to be a leading school for students with autism that nurtures, develops and equips them with the skills needed to live happy, healthy, and rewarding lives.

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Physical Address: 1520 Knob Creek Road, Johnson City, TN 37604

(The front door has a mail slot where you can drop notes, forms, or payments)

Mailing Address: PO Box 6024, Johnson City, TN 37602

Email Address: info@jeremiahschool.com

School Phone Number: (423) 915-9257

Principal Contact: Gina Habit, (209) 202-7086, ginahabit@gmail.com

Executive Director Contact: Joanna Cullen, (423) 943-8796, jocullen1969@gmail.com

Attendance: Please notify the school as soon as possible of your child's absence. You may call the office or send an email. If no parent/guardian contact is made, school staff will text/call to check on the student. Absences will be EXCUSED with a doctor's note or a parent/guardian note dependant on the circumstances. Please send the notes in the student's Communication Folder. If a student is absent four or more consecutive days, a doctor's note is required. Acceptable reasons for absence include:

- Child's personal illness (see "communicable illnesses, ailments and lice" below)
- Special circumstances including, but not limited to, death in the immediate family, family emergency requiring the student's assistance, etc. (administration will make the determination on whether the circumstance warrants excusing the absence)
- Special and recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of that particular faith
- Medical or dental appointments that cannot be arranged during non-school hours
- Circumstances, which in the judgment of the principal, create an emergency over which the student has no control
- Although parents/guardians may request a maximum of 5 days to be excused at parent discretion, Jeremiah School does not recommend missing school if avoidable

We completely understand that there are a variety of autism-related/medical reasons attendance can be affected, so please communicate with us about the issue and we will provide as much support as possible.

ARRIVAL: School hours are from 8:00 am through 2:30 pm Monday–Friday. Students should arrive no earlier than 8:00 and instruction begins at 8:15. Parents should drop off students outside of the gym. Students will be met by a member of staff and will report directly to their classroom. We encourage students to walk in independently. Teachers are not available for conferencing before school, but feel free to send an email, put a note in the Communication Folder, or give a note to the staff on morning drop-off duty. If you arrive later than 8:15, you will need to walk your student into the front office to sign them in. A staff member will accompany them to class. If you know your child will be late or absent, please communicate with the principal or office manager.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: Students are not permitted to have personal devices at school. If a student accidentally has their cell phone, tablet or other device at school, it must be powered off and handed to the teacher. If students do not follow this policy, their device will be held until dismissal, at which time the phone will be returned to the family.

CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION: Please communicate any concerns you have with the appropriate staff to best address the concern. For example, if the concern is a classroom concern, please communicate with the teacher first. If additional support is needed to address the concern, the principal would be the next step. If the issue is still not resolved, the executive director will assist. It is our goal to stay student focused and open to all feedback. We expect challenges and we want to work together with our families to build strong support systems for our students. Communication can be shared in the Communication Folder, via email, or a conference can be requested.

CHECKING OUT DURING THE SCHOOL DAY: For pre arranged appointments and other reasons to leave school during the day, please check your child out in the main office. The office staff will call your child's classroom

teacher and have your child sent to the office. If at all possible, please let the teacher or principal know in advance of the appointment so we can make arrangements that will be least stressful for your child.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING: In accordance with TN state law, Jeremiah School will report possible physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. The school will consider all available facts and circumstances. The purpose of the state requirement is to protect children. Accordingly, Jeremiah School's protection is based upon a reasonable belief that the conduct covered by the statute has occurred or is occurring. Appropriate school staff will make reports in accordance with state law and in the best interest of the affected child. In nearly all cases, it is the protocol of the school to inform parents of any matter with regards to their child; however, due to this very serious and legally narrow area, the school may not be at liberty to contact parents in advance of making a report to authorities. The Tennessee child abuse reporting statute (37.1.403) makes no distinction between professionals and non-professionals on the issue of reporting. Parents also have a responsibility to make a report based on "available information" in a situation that "reasonably" appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse. Jeremiah School is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, visitors, and staff. For that reason, the school reserves the right to enact specific parameters for adult/student interactions. School parameters may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the admittance to school campus, and admittance to school sponsored events. The school may identify additional requirements as a condition for admittance on campus or to school related events. It is at the school's sole discretion to conclude that added protections or safeguards are necessary for the protection of students, visitors, and staff. The school retains the authorization to enact parameters regardless of whether or not an official report was made to the Tennessee Department of Child Services (DCS) or regardless of whether or not DCS determines a report warrants no further state action. In addition to the above, the school reserves the right, at any time, to place any other procedures or requirements in its sole discretion, as it may deem necessary in the best interest of the school.

CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION: You can expect a monthly newsletter, three Reports of Progress and periodic email updates from your child's classroom teacher to help you stay informed on classroom happenings. Each student has a Communication Folder where information can be shared between school and home. Please check for the folder daily and respond appropriately to any information. The classroom teachers will also check the folders daily. If you have any questions or concerns related to the classroom, please contact your child's teacher. It is our desire to keep you informed and engaged in your child's education at Jeremiah School.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS: At Jeremiah School, we want all of our classrooms to be calm, comfortable, happy learning environments. To do this:

- We build in movement, breaks, and multiple accommodations in every classroom throughout the day to address anticipatable sensory and attentional needs specifically tailored to the students in that class.
- Learning the appropriate times to move, when to talk, and how to plan and advocate for sensory needs are important parts of what we work on with students. This is an end goal that often requires trial and error, creativity, and practice.
- We work toward students staying seated, paying attention, working quietly, and working as independently as possible. We have students in each class who need a quiet environment to focus on assignments and on the teacher, so we try to keep disruptions to a minimum so that everyone has the best possible learning environment.

- We expect students to keep their hands and all objects to themselves. Understanding physical boundaries and respecting the personal boundaries of others is very important.

COMMUNICABLE ILLNESSES, AILMENTS AND LICE: The following may require your child to stay home or be dismissed early from school. This list is not exclusive.

- COVID Exposure- We follow the CDC and local Health Department guidance for isolation and quarantine. Since this guidance continues to change, please consult the CDC website, the Health Department, or call the school with questions.
- Strep Throat - May return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins.
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhea - Dismissal after an episode if accompanied with general malaise or other symptoms of illness. Students must remain home until 24 hours with no symptoms.
- Conjunctivitis (Pink eye) – The student returns after 24 hours of antibiotic drops or medical permit.
- Head Lice – The student will be sent home for treatment. All nits must be removed before reentering the classroom. Students will be rechecked to determine effectiveness of treatment and removal of nits. The student must be nit and lice free to return.
- Fever – Temperatures of 100 degrees or higher will warrant checkout. Students should remain home for 24 hours after a fever is gone.
- Chicken Pox - Permitted back to the classroom six days after initial onset and all lesions are crusted.
- Impetigo - May return after treatment and all lesions are crusted over.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information provided to the school regarding an individual child remains confidential. The following exceptions apply: (a) All staff shall have access to student files, including information that has been provided by the parents, other staff and outside consultants, therapists, and medical personnel, and (b) staff may discuss a child with outside professionals and specialists who consult with Jeremiah School, but only as is relevant to that child’s treatment and development, and only with permission from the family.

DISMISSAL: Students are to be picked up between 2:20-2:30 pm at the gym. Students will wait in the gym or classroom until their name is called. You will be given a student name sign that must be displayed in your front passenger window. Please ensure that students are picked up no later than 2:35 promptly. If someone other than a parent is picking up a student, the parent must notify the school office in advance, preferably in writing with sufficient notice. The names and contact numbers of any adults authorized to pick up a student should be included in the student’s record, which is held in the office. If a parent will be late for pickup due to unforeseen circumstances, the office must be informed. If a parent is habitually late picking up a student in the afternoon, additional fees for supervision may be assessed.

DRESS GUIDELINES: Each parent is encouraged to do a check at home to ensure that clothing fits the Jeremiah School guidelines. Casual dress is acceptable but must be neat and modest. Backs, cleavage, tummies, and underclothing should not be seen. Pajamas, costumes or masks should not be worn unless it has been approved by staff for a special occasion. or other nightwear is not permitted. Neither should clothing that is designed to be underwear, be worn as outerwear. If a student’s clothing is inappropriate and cannot be covered up with an article of his/her own clothing, parents will be contacted to bring a change of clothes. In general, please refrain from wearing unsafe, inappropriate, or immodest clothing. We appreciate your help in making sure students are dressed comfortably and in a manner that does not distract or inflame others.

Comfortable footwear safe for outdoor and gym activities is recommended. Footwear with wheels should not be worn.

EARLY DISMISSALS, DELAYED OPENING, AND CLOSURES: Jeremiah School will generally follow Johnson City Schools weather-related delays, early dismissals, and closures. These closures will be emailed and/or texted. Some closures relating to flu or other sickness outbreaks for Jeremiah School may differ from Johnson City Schools. Regarding weather, some of our students live in areas where the weather may be worse than it is in town. If Jeremiah School is open, but road conditions between your home and the school are dangerous, please do not put yourself at risk by attempting to drive to school. Call the office and inform us of your circumstances.

FIELD TRIPS: Throughout the year, classes will participate in various field trips and off campus enrichment activities. Permission forms that describe the details of the event will be sent home for your prior approval. Trip costs generally range from free to \$20. We work hard to keep these as low as possible and utilize grant funding where possible to finance these enrichment opportunities.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: There is a limited amount of financial aid available for families based on need. Financial information is processed independently by Financial Aid for School Tuition (FAST). Any families intending to apply for Financial Aid should complete the FAST application found on the Admissions page of the school website www.jeremiahschool.com as early in the spring as possible. Financial assistance awards are made at the discretion of the Executive Team with the approval of the Board of Directors.

FOOD: We know food is tricky for many of our students, so any time there needs to be an exception for your child due to sensory, medication, or other issues, please let us know. We will be VERY FLEXIBLE regarding food issues related to autism, but we want to be very consistent with our daily practice and expectations. These are the general guidelines we will follow unless special arrangements have been made:

- Students should eat breakfast **before** they come to school (not bring in breakfast food or drinks).
- Students need to bring in a water bottle each day. We encourage them to stay hydrated and they are able to take their water bottle with them throughout the day.
- Students can bring one bottle of something other than water (soda, Snapple, etc.) to drink during lunch only. At the end of the lunch period, students will discard any remaining beverage.
- Students need to bring a snack daily. We prefer food and drink to be as healthy as possible, since many of our students react strongly to food dyes, sugar, artificial sweeteners, and gluten.
- Students do not have access to a refrigerator or microwave, so please plan their lunches accordingly.
- Please avoid sending in large amounts of candy and sweet items for the class- except for special occasions and when planned in advance.
- We discourage students from sharing their food with other students, since they are unaware of the specific food issues and allergies each student has. Students are expected to eat their own food, not bring any extra items for others, and not take food from their friends.

GRADING: Grades are not assigned to work completed by elementary or middle school students. Grades can have a negative effect on students, as they may feel they have 'failed' if they get some questions wrong or have misunderstood a concept. In place of traditional grading, teachers will complete a Report of Progress

each trimester in order to inform parents about student's performance on main objectives in each academic subject. For college-bound high school students working on a selective curriculum, grades may be given for some work assignments and assessments, as these may inform class credits and a GPA necessary for applying to higher education.

HOMEWORK: It is the policy of the school not to assign homework for students. Homework can often be a considerable source of stress for both students and their parents, and the school feels it is important for the students to have time to take part in other activities when at home. Small or optional homework tasks, such as research, reading or skills practice, may be given when appropriate at the discretion of the teachers in cooperation with parents. For high school, college bound students, homework tasks may be set.

HONOR CODE: As parents and teachers, it is our wish to educate students of honor. We expect our students to be honest in every aspect of life. This demands that each student do his/her own work. Being untruthful, taking things that are not yours, and encouraging others to be dishonest is unacceptable. This may include plagiarism, copying work from another student, or cheating on tests/assignments in any way (such as looking at someone else's paper or using a cheat sheet). Jeremiah School will continue to support students to find honorable ways to be successful.

IMMUNIZATION RECORDS: All required health immunization records or official medical/religious exemptions are required to be submitted and on file within a week of your child starting school. Please note that Medical Exemptions must be updated every year. Please include any relevant COVID information.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS (IEPS) AND GOALS: As a private school, Jeremiah School does not write or adhere to IEPs. The entire curriculum is focused on meeting the needs of each individual, and accommodations are made as a matter of course. IEPs from previous school settings are used to inform the teacher's understanding of each child at the time of their admission to Jeremiah School. The school does produce student profiles with detailed sensory needs and for each student in different areas of their development. Data is collected to show progress being made towards the academic goals, and reflected on the Reports of Progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION: The school utilizes multiple ways to provide information to parents including the following:

- *School website*- Parents should check this regularly for news and events. The website address is www.jeremiahschool.com.
- *Email*- Email is our primary method of communication. If a parent does not have access to email, paper copies will be provided, but this will slow down the process of getting information home. Emails to teachers will be answered as soon as possible, but generally not during the instructional day when they are focused on students. Typically, teachers can respond to emails within 24 hours.
- *Telephone*- Parents can call the school office. Parents should communicate with teachers to identify the best method of communication. At the teacher's discretion, personal phone numbers may be shared.
- *Text*- The principal may use text to get messages to parents quickly. Parents should not text or call the principal or Executive Director after school hours unless it is an emergency. If there is information that needs to be passed on, please email.

- *Facebook*- The school currently has two Facebook pages. One is a general Jeremiah School Page for the public and the other is the Jeremiah School Family Page for families and staff only. We will post news of school events but will ensure that important information is also communicated through other methods for those who do not use Facebook. Although staff participate in the Jeremiah School Family Facebook Page, they are asked to not “friend” parents on their personal Facebook Page to ensure their privacy and to keep clear boundaries between personal views and our school’s mission, vision, and core values.
- *Parent/teacher conferences*- Jeremiah School will schedule multiple opportunities for conferences during the year. Teachers or parents can request additional conferences when needed by contacting your child’s teacher. The initial parent-teacher conferences will be held during the week of September 11-15th, 2023 by appointment. Teachers will reach out to families to schedule these appointments. All other conferences and important dates will be communicated from staff to families with adequate notice.
- *End of Year School Report*- Parents will receive a detailed school report at the end of the school year. This is not a list of grades. It is a narrative account provided by multiple staff members of each child’s progress throughout the year. It will be provided to families on the last day of school or mailed home at the conclusion of the school year.

INTERNET/TECHNOLOGY POLICY: Internet/technology users are expected to not violate the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. A school email is provided to each student. Students should not change their assigned school login information. Chromebooks and other computers used at school will be monitored for safe, appropriate use. The school has an internet firewall system in place (Sonic Wall) which blocks access to inappropriate sites and social media. However, this is not entirely failsafe, therefore students should not write or send abusive messages, use inappropriate language, share personal addresses or phone numbers of students or staff, play unapproved games, access unapproved sites, or use chats from social media. In addition to our school Internet policy, we ask that parents/guardians voluntarily monitor their student’s usage of the Internet and telephone at home. Gossiping, bullying, and harassment done via email, instant messaging, text messaging, 3-way calling, and social media sites are often done outside school hours, but the problems created in these situations typically follow the student to school. While we can address these issues in school, responsibility for appropriate internet use is down to each parent in their own home. School cannot be held responsible for behaviors of students out of school hours.

MEDICINE: If under exceptional circumstances a student is required to take oral medication during school hours, designated staff will administer the medication as prescribed. Authorizations to administer medication forms are available at the front office. Nonprescription medication, such as aspirin, will not be administered without explicit written permission from the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian will be expected to provide the medication.

PARENTAL CONTACT INFORMATION: Each family will fill in a contact form with information about their address, phone numbers and email. It is the parent’s responsibility to keep this information up to date, so please notify us immediately when any of this important contact information changes.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES - Parents should:

- Be aware of classroom expectations
- Be supportive of school staff
- Provide high expectations and abundant encouragement to your child
- Ensure your child comes to school with water, snack, and lunch daily
- Maintain positive ongoing communication with the teacher
- Drop off and pick up students on time daily
- Share and reinforce this handbook

PRIVATE THERAPIES: When possible, Jeremiah School will make space available for private therapists during the school day. If you are interested in setting this up, please contact the principal.

RECORDING AND VIDEOING DEVICES PROHIBITED: Students are not permitted to have video or audio recording devices at school, whether on their person, in their bookbag, or in their clothing. We consider this a violation of the privacy rights of the other children in the class. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the principal.

REQUEST FOR ANIMALS ON CAMPUS FOR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES: Because some animals can cause or worsen allergic reactions, spread bacteria, or cause damage, the following guidelines shall be observed whenever a request is made to allow animals to be on the school campus.

- A request to allow an animal to be on school campus or in a specific class must be made in writing and approved by the school principal prior to the event. The written request should include the following:
 - How the presence of the animal on campus is related to the curriculum and will contribute to instruction.
 - The date of the event.
 - The length of time the animal will be on campus.
 - Where the animal will be located on campus, and
 - The person that will be in charge of the animal while on campus.
- The request should also include proof that the animal has received all vaccinations.
- Whenever the principal approves an animal on campus, the school notifies parents in advance of the event. The notification will include the specific date the animal will be on campus.
- Animals must be kept in an appropriate cage, container, or on a leash or other restraint as to not endanger students and staff.
- At no time will an animal be approved to be transported on a school bus or any vehicle with students/staff present.
- Animals that remain in classrooms (i.e., fish, hamsters, etc.) must be approved by the principal. State requirements must be followed and will be provided once permission is granted.
- The principal or designee shall be responsible for contacting local animal control authorities if any wild or stray animal(s) are found in the school building or on the school campus.
- These procedures do not apply to law enforcement canine units or approved assistance and service animals. Additional instruction will be provided by the principal for assistance and/or service animals when permission for campus visits are approved.

RESOLVING CONCERNS: If a family has concerns with any of the professional staff or Jeremiah School programs and is unable to resolve an issue, they should notify the principal either by phone, email, or writing. The principal will work with the family and the appropriate staff members to address concerns. The executive director is also available to assist, when necessary.

RESPECT: Each teacher is in charge of his/her classroom and has the responsibility of helping students adhere to school-wide expectations. All staff members are responsible for addressing inappropriate behavior and helping students learn how to manage their needs in a safe and appropriate manner. We expect students to demonstrate respect for themselves, their classmates, staff, and guests. We want all classroom environments to be positive learning environments for all students.

SAFETY: Safety is our utmost concern. Throughout the year the students will take part in a number of different safety and emergency drills, including fire, lock down, and severe weather so that we will be prepared. Students may receive safety talks from community agencies. Please observe posted speed limits and use caution when picking up or dropping off your children. Elopement from an assigned classroom or space is a very serious matter due to the location of our buildings in proximity to very busy streets. We will involve parents and work to address any safety concerns and to develop appropriate supports.

SEVERE BEHAVIORS: At Jeremiah School, we do not tolerate any bullying, fighting, possession of a weapon, alcoholic beverages, or drugs of any kind. A student whose behavior is threatening to others will be subject to disciplinary action that could result in dismissal from Jeremiah School. This includes interfering with a safe learning environment, infringing on the rights of others, or harassment/bullying of any type (verbal, written, electronic, physical teasing or threats). In the event of a threatening or violent incident, parents will be called to immediately remove their student from the school for the rest of the day. The student may also be excluded for additional days to allow staff and parents to assess the student's needs and come up with a plan for moving forward. When the student returns after the exclusion, there will be a debrief by a member of staff to assess the student's mental readiness for return to the classroom, and to provide some 1:1 counseling. This immediate removal and suspension policy is in place to protect all students and staff. It allows all involved to slow down and make a new plan, which will help prevent escalation and possible dismissal. We want to do what is right both for the individual student and the school community.

STUDENT INFORMATION PACKET: Parents are given forms at the beginning of the year that need to be completed as quickly as possible and returned to the school. These include emergency contact forms, internet consent, photo release, school transportation, public transit transportation, immunization papers, and medical information.

TESTING AND ASSESSMENT: Teachers informally assess learning during teaching to check student's understanding of topics and concepts. Often these are fun or quick activities that do not cause the students any stress. More formalized assessment is carried out at certain times of the year to allow placement at the correct level of learning, such as curriculum diagnostic and benchmark assessments. It is a requirement of our status as a Category 5 school in TN that each child undertake a nationally standardized test in grades 2-8 and grade 10. Until we have the capacity and resources to administer an applicable assessment, we will continue to work with Johnson City Schools to administer the WIAT IV (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test) in the

spring. Results will be mailed home to families at the conclusion of the school year. If copies are needed earlier for grant/funding reporting (like state education grants or disability services), or to share with other service providers, please request a copy from the school.

TRANSPORTATION TO FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER OUTINGS: Jeremiah School uses off-site facilities as part of its curriculum. A Jeremiah School bus is used to transport students on most occasions. Additionally, private transportation is used to transport students to work or volunteer placements. This means that your child may be in situations where they will be riding with a staff member in a private vehicle. In these instances, a staff member will operate the vehicle and follow all rules for safety. Please reinforce rules at home regarding proper behavior and consideration of others so that traveling in school groups can be a successful experience.

TUITION: Tuition for Jeremiah School is \$11,000 per year. Tuition may be paid in one lump sum or spread over 11 monthly payments. Monthly payments are collected via direct deposit. Early in the spring of each year, a re-enrollment form is sent out. A \$200 deposit is due by April 30 to secure the child's place for the following school year. This is deducted from the next year's tuition fee. All tuition balances from the current school year have to be cleared before a child is accepted for re-enrollment. All financial questions should be directed to the Executive Director.

VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION: During health-related quarantine periods, anticipatable inclement weather days, or facility interferences, we will provide virtual instruction. Students are taught how to use all online programs as part of their daily instruction, so that they will be able to log in and access the information at home. We prepare appropriate virtual instruction for all students, but we consider virtual instruction optional. We know that many of our students have difficulty with assigned virtual learning at home and we leave it up to the parents to determine if a student participates and which activities are beneficial. Students are not penalized in any way for non-participation in virtual learning.

VOLUNTEERS: If you would like to volunteer in the classroom, please fill out a volunteer form in the office. It will take approximately one week to be approved. Once you are approved (which will involve running your driving license through a database for criminal and sex offender registry history checks) and begin your volunteer service, please sign in at the office, and display your volunteer pass prominently while in the building. Volunteers are expected to follow all school policies and procedures, (i.e., confidentiality, etc.) Please sign out when your volunteer responsibilities are complete. COVID conditions and related precautions may limit volunteer access to students and classrooms. Parent volunteers are not permitted to work in their own child's classroom.