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Saxon Hill School Family Handbook

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Welcome

1.0 Welcome

Welcome to the Saxon Hill School, Inc. ("Saxon Hill") community! We believe that Saxon Hill is a unique and wonderful place for young children and their families. As a member of a family cooperative preschool, you and your family are partners in your child's education. In addition to being involved in the classroom and working closely with our teaching staff, families also share in the responsibility for the school's operation. While it is true that a family co-op requires more involvement than a traditional preschool, the reward is a deep involvement in your child's first school experiences and a unique sense of community with the staff and other families at Saxon Hill.

This Family Handbook will familiarize you with Saxon Hill's philosophies, practices, and procedures. **We recommend that you read the main sections prior to the start of school: Our Educational Philosophy, Our Village, and Our School Day.** Several appendices are included for your information when questions arise. If you have further questions not found in the handbook, please ask the Person-at-Large (PAL) for your class, a Leadership Council member or one of our teachers. We look forward to supporting your child and family in the years ahead.

1.1 History

In 1964, in DeeDee Jameson's home on Skunk Hollow Road, Saxon Hill School welcomed its first group of children and families. Over six decades later, Saxon Hill has become a special "school home" to over a thousand local area families. To read more history, please visit our website, www.SaxonHillSchool.org.

1.2 Mission Statement

Saxon Hill School empowers families to be deeply involved in the educational experience of their children, fostering the sense of community among children, families and teachers. By developing both children and families, Reggio-Emilia principles are reinforced in and out of the classroom. Saxon Hill School is committed to excellence, connection and lifelong wonder through the support of highly credentialed educators, NAEYC accreditation and focused leadership.

1.3 Nondiscrimination Statement

Saxon Hill School does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or marital status in its governance, education, admissions, or employment policies.

Our Educational Philosophy

2.0 Our Educational Philosophy

The philosophy of the Saxon Hill staff is based on our knowledge of current research and best practice, as well as an understanding coming from years of observing and working with preschool children. We value each child as a unique and capable individual who brings curiosity and potential, which drives interest in understanding the world and their place in it.

Our goals are:

- Strengthening each child's enthusiasm for learning;
- Supporting growth in a child's ability to communicate thoughts, questions, and discoveries;
- Developing intellectual competencies and a sense of success;
- Increasing self-awareness and empathy; and
- Building the ability to recognize and take responsibility for their impact as a community member.

2.1 Fundamental Principles

We operate under the following principles:

1. Children are capable of constructing their own learning.
 - a. All children are driven by their curiosity and individual interests to know more.
 - b. Children learn and integrate knowledge of their world and of themselves through play and through genuine and realistic experiences interacting with their world.
 - c. Young children need to question, explore and experiment using many different modalities as they negotiate their individual paths of discovery.
2. Children form an understanding of themselves and their place in the world through interactions with others.
 - a. Children, teachers, and families are partners in the collaboration of learning.
 - b. This collaborative exploration implies that thoughts and questions of children are respected and valued.
 - c. Moreover, adults are not the givers of answers, but mentors and guides as they share in this process.
3. Children are communicators.

- a. Children can use oral, written, and body language to investigate, explore, share their thoughts and observations and solve problems.
 - b. Children can express their feelings, resolve conflicts, and assume responsibility for their actions and words.
 - c. Adults support the children's ability to distinguish between a child's behavior and a child's self; the unique value of the child is not diminished by disappointment in their behavior.
- 4. The environment is the Third Teacher.
 - a. Space and materials have the potential to inspire, challenge, and encourage children to delve deeper into their investigations and problem-solving.
 - b. The space should invite collaboration, communication, and sharing of ideas which supports a safe environment that encourages creativity and the ability to take personal risks.
 - c. Materials that most effectively allow and encourage creative thinking and discovery are aesthetically pleasing and open-ended, inviting exploration.
 - d. Children and adults share the responsibility in caring for school environments.
- 5. Outdoor learning is a central feature of the program, with frequent, regular opportunities for outdoor play and learning in natural spaces.
 - a. Immersion in the natural environment means learning through exposure to nature and nature-based activities.
 - b. Nature-based learning includes learning about the natural world but extends to engagement in any subject, skill, or interest while in natural surroundings.
- 6. Children benefit from healthy exposure to risks.
 - a. Risk is a challenge or uncertainty that a child can recognize in their environment and determine whether to engage with it or not. (e.g. climbing trees, jumping off heights, using hammers and saws, rough and tumble play)
 - b. Risks are viewed as a generally valuable benefit of engagement with the natural world.
 - c. Appropriate risks can: physically engage; inspire creativity and imagination; emotionally challenge; promote collaboration and group problem-solving; encourage the development of executive functioning skills and self-regulation.
 - d. Adults do benefit-risk assessments of our environments and focus on "as safe as necessary" rather than "as safe as possible."
- 7. Adults are mentors and guides.
 - a. Projects emerge based on the children's interests.
 - b. Adults observe and provide opportunities and materials for further exploration and extended investigation.

- c. The adult role is to listen, question, observe, reflect, and support each child's process-supporting the skills, self-initiation and self-direction that end in the feeling of success: "I did it!!" "I can do it myself!!"
 - d. Children develop ability in social/emotional interactions, cognitive skills, language and literacy, and physical competence when provided the tools of exploration and practice.
- 8. Children have many different ways of expressing understanding, thoughts, and creativity.
 - a. Play, hands on experiences, and practice are the tools of early education allowing children to:
 - i. develop focus and self-control,
 - ii. take the perspective of others,
 - iii. communicate,
 - iv. make connections,
 - v. take on challenges, and
 - vi. become self-directed learners.
 - b. Each child has a unique mixture of modalities/styles through which they process information and incorporate understanding. The early education environment should provide varied opportunities using all the senses and languages of learning.
- 9. Documentation of children's thoughts and their process of learning provides opportunities for reflection, questions, and discovery.
 - a. Children, families, and staff are important partners in understanding the process of learning.
 - b. Documentation includes photographs, transcriptions of thoughts and explorations, drawings, sculptures, and other physical works that demonstrate the processes of learning.

Our principles of understanding are based on the work of:

- The Reggio Emilia Approach
- The Hundred Languages of Children
- John Dewey
- Ellen Galinsky and Lillian Katz who explore the multiple learning styles of children
- Rudolph Steiner, founder of the Waldorf School

2.2 An Integrated Educational Approach

Social/Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and the Arts

At Saxon Hill School, teachers guide children as they develop age-appropriate skills and knowledge through play-based exploration. Inspired by the interests of children and supported by the Director of Education, an intentionally planned curriculum emerges throughout the year. The staff's expert knowledge of child development informs the activity choices and daily schedules. Children are supported as they pursue personal passions, developing autonomy and self-regulation. Opportunities

to practice focus, persistence, resilience and mindfulness are numerous and ongoing. Hands-on exploration of the vast outside environment occurs daily.

Adults are mentors and guides. We hold it our responsibility to:

- Create an intellectually engaging environment with a variety of materials and experiences;
- Provide children opportunities and time to explore areas of interest through active involvement;
- Extend children's interests and scope of thought with new ideas, problems and experiences;
- Encourage development of initiative in choosing and planning their own learning activities;
- Utilize a range of strategies when supporting individual children, such as providing cues and other forms of scaffolding;
- Model curiosity and focused-attention;
- Encourage children to reflect on and revisit learning experiences; and
- Support collaboration and establish a sense of community.

A consistent daily schedule within each program helps children feel secure and ready to learn. However, we allow ourselves to depart from the usual schedule for the sake of a new experience and practicing flexibility.

2.3 Developmental Continuum

Saxon Hill School curriculum and assessment practices are based on an understanding that children learn in different rhythms influenced by individual interests, different ways of processing input from the outside world, and the amount of exposure, practice, and emotional connection with any given skill. This means that the rate at which children learn different skills varies widely within a typical range. Children with an innate drive for physical activity will walk sooner, pump on the swings earlier, and take greater risks climbing trees. Children who are more orally expressive may create stories, write, and begin to read earlier. Children who have more visual sensitivity may be creative artists, enjoy color and texture, and take pleasure in dressing themselves. All attributes have both positive and challenging aspects for the child to negotiate. Our curriculum is designed to support children's building successful strategies and achieving a sense of competence in their ability to explore, persist, and problem solve.

We believe that children can:

- Learn to trust themselves and others
- Learn self-regulation
- Gain an awareness of others and develop empathy
- Be spontaneous when expressing feelings
- Become self-reliant and self-starting
- Form and express creative ideas
- Listen with heightened and prolonged attentiveness and focus
- Extend and refine basic moving, manipulation, and communication skills
- Acquire factual information, develop the capacity to conceptualize and represent ideas

- Enhance a variety of interests and utilize a range of resources
- Find pleasure in the process as well as the product
- Develop a Growth Mindset: the desire to try, the courage to fail, and the persistence to continue their effort.

2.4 Modeling Appreciation of Differences

All adults hold responsibility for creating an atmosphere of respect and inclusion by:

- Treating all children with respect and offering opportunities for them to lead using their individual strengths;
- Valuing differences by initiating activities and discussion that build on a positive sense of self;
- Intervening when children tease or reject others;
- Modeling inclusion, collaboration, and cooperation;
- Avoiding stereotypical language/labeling in reference to age, sex, gender, religion, race, ability, culture, socio-economic status, physical differences, and abilities; and
- Providing models and visual images of children and adults with a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and differing abilities.

2.5 Curriculum

Curriculum for programs is guided by Vermont Early Learning Standards, Saxon Hill's Reggio-inspired philosophy, and developmentally appropriate practice based on:

- Understanding of child development and learning;
- Knowledge of the age-related characteristics of materials, interaction, and experiences that permit general predictions of activities that will be safe, healthy, engaging and challenging to children; and
- Awareness of social and cultural contexts in which children live in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for participating children and families.

Curriculum is created to:

- Support the curiosity, self-initiated exploration and discovery that engender a love of learning;
- Develop knowledge, understanding, inquiry and communication; and
- Contain a high level of expectation that honors children as capable learners.

Curriculum assessment is on-going, purposeful, and benefits children by:

- Suggesting adaptations to curriculum and teaching strategies that will meet the developmental and learning needs of the specific group and individual children;
- Providing data that will help families and teachers create a shared understanding of a child's needs; and
- Providing a means of evaluating program effectiveness and areas of potential improvement.

Curriculum is examined and developed through an Anti-Bias lens that aims to:

- Support children's development of a confident sense of identity without needing to feel superior to others;
- Create an ease with human diversity;
- Develop a sense of fairness and justice and the skills of empowerment; and
- Develop the ability to advocate for themselves and others.

2.6 Assessment

Saxon Hill strives to provide families with a comprehensive picture of their children's experiences and progress throughout the school year. Children's development is assessed through:

- observations
- anecdotal records
- photographic documentation
- running records
- checklists
- Ages & Stages 3 Questionnaires
- the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System

Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) is an ongoing assessment of children that supports planning learning experiences focused on helping all children succeed. It is a comprehensive assessment system based on the latest research, proven valid and reliable, and fully aligned with the state early learning guidelines. It informs teachers' planning of a developmentally appropriate, emergent curriculum that meets the needs and emphasizes the strengths and interests of each child.

Families are encouraged to discuss with teachers their children's interests, concerns, and progress which will be documented on their Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) site, in portfolios and during Family/Teacher conferences that are scheduled bi-yearly or upon request.

Outside specialists (Early Essential Education partners of school districts, Child Care Resource specialists) may be requested to aid in the collection of information about a child, to determine eligibility for special services or to recommend to teachers effective strategies and learning experiences for an individual child.

Assessment data are confidential and stored in a secure location. Staff members are trained to use and interpret all of the above assessment tools.

If families or teachers have concerns, we will follow the Student Referral Procedure:

- Teachers will contact parents to discuss concerns, gather information, brainstorm strategies to address concerns, and if deemed necessary and/or beneficial to refer the child for outside screening.
- Teachers in partnership with families will implement suggested strategies
- Teachers will monitor the progress of children in response to strategies.
- If a child is referred to outside services, teachers will record
 - Follow up on the referral
 - What, if any, developmental delay has been identified

- Adaptations that may be included in the classroom program in order to enhance the child's progress.

If invited by the family, teachers will collaborate with the family and the appropriate school district in developing and implementing an IEP/IFSP and comply with reporting requirements.

Teachers will collaborate with consultants hired by individual families or the school districts as needed. Saxon Hill does not enter into contracts with specialized consultants for individual children.

Saxon Hill will retain the right to select Individual Assistants that will work as one on one with children regardless of the funding source. Should it be deemed that an individual assistant/one-on-one is needed to facilitate a child's safe and successful inclusion, Saxon Hill will make every effort to attain funding for this support. If the support team determines that a child cannot safely attend the program despite available accommodations and interventions, Saxon Hill will work with the support team to determine whether the child's needs will be better met in another program.

Saxon Hill aims for a "Goodness of Fit" for the child and the program. Every child deserves the chance to be successful. In the event that the family and Saxon Hill find Saxon Hill is not a successful fit for an individual, Saxon Hill will work with the family to assist in the transition to another environment that will better fit the child and family.



2.7 Positive Guidance

Saxon Hill School Rules:
We take care of ourselves
We take care of others
We take care of our school

In guiding children's behavior, it is important to be clear, positive, firm and consistent. To promote the development of self-control, self-help skills, and ways to get along with others, we offer children choices and opportunities to make decisions, guided by logical consequences. Children develop respect for themselves, others and materials when they understand reasons why it is important.

Methods of Positive Guidance

We view guiding children through issues as an opportunity to model and practice problem solving skills. Our goal is for children to be able to negotiate and solve

conflicts independently. Below are some examples of helpful adult language during various challenging situations. More helpful phrases and other parenting resources can be found linked to the *Current Family* page on our website.

State your observation of the situation:

"It looks like you both want to look at that book."

"It sounds like you are having a disagreement."

"I notice that you are upset."

Create calm and listen to the child(ren)'s perspective:

"I'll hold the book until we decide what to do next."

"Let's take a big breath together so we can talk and work this out."

"Can I help?"

Joint problem-solving:

Encourage the child(ren) to work together to solve the problem. The adult can suggest solutions if necessary.

"You could ask to be next with book."

"First Suzy will say what happened, and then Jake will have a turn to say what happened."

"You are missing your mom. What could help you feel better?"

This helps children understand and label needs, wants, and emotions, and how to use problem-solving skills.

Follow-up:

Assist as needed in following through with the agreed upon solution.

2.8 Behavioral Concerns

In our experience, when a child's needs are being met and their interests are attended to, there will be very little need for adult intervention in the usual course of the day. There may be times when a child's behavior or actions cause distress or safety concerns for the staff and other children in the program. Behaviors which would call for intervention include biting, aggressive physical acts, inappropriate language, physical or verbal harassment, or other harmful acts toward the staff or other children.

In an effort to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all children and adults, we will respond to behavioral concerns with one or more of the following:

- Comfort recipient of the behavior first. Remove the "aggressor" from the immediate area.
- Discuss the situation with the "aggressor". Redirect the children to a new situation.

- Provide other activities for releasing or calming energy. Acknowledge appropriate, safe behaviors.
- Check in with the mood and feelings of the class in relation to concerning behaviors. Address any of the children's questions, concerns, and sense of safety. Discuss and practice self-advocacy strategies with individuals and whole group.
- Look for patterns or recent changes that might provide information regarding the source of the behavior of concern.
- Encourage the use of words between children and others, especially through modeling and or providing words to match feelings and actions.
- Create clear and consistent expectations across home and school environments.
- Provide temporary one-on-one staff member for the child until a resolution is found.
- Discuss the situation with families/guardians and staff and with external supports when parental/guardian permission is received.
- Take steps agreed upon by staff, families/guardians, and additional supports when appropriate.
- Engage in ongoing assessment of the behavior and behavioral plan

Please remember that we highly value confidentiality as a protection for families, staff, and children. We will maintain this to the greatest degree possible in any situation. All notes, forms and other documentation in a child's or other school file are to be held in the same confidential manner.

We look to these situations as opportunities for children to gain skills of communicating, collaborating, compromising, negotiating, and problem solving. We see these same values available to the adults involved in the situation. We strongly seek a resolution that serves all parties in the best way given the circumstances.

2.9 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. If an enrolled student is eligible for special education and related services under IDEA, SHSI will collaborate with families, districts and/or public agencies to determine how to best meet the needs of the child, and follow the Student Referral Procedure as outlined above under Assessment.

2.10 NAEYC & STARS Recognition



National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Saxon Hill School has been accredited by NAEYC since 1998. This continues to be a significant achievement as NAEYC is the most widely recognized professional organization in the nation. Every five years Saxon Hill undergoes a comprehensive process of internal self-study and external professional review to ensure that we meet the criteria for a High-Quality Early Childhood Program.

In 2025, NAEYC updated their system to allow for three levels of levels of accreditation, creating flexibility for new programs to apply at lower levels and move up. Saxon Hill School has been awarded the highest level of accreditation within the new system, **Accreditation +**, in recognition of our commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

It is an honor to be recognized at the highest level of achievement by such a prestigious organization.



Vermont Association for the
Education of Young Children

You may see the logo for the Vermont arm of NAEYC sponsoring child centered events around the state. This is a wonderful organization to support. Among other things, VTAEYC provides Early Educators with professional development opportunities, guidance and grants.



Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS)

STARS is Vermont's quality recognition system for childcare programs and preschools. The 1-5 rating system identifies programs that range from those in the early stages of self-assessment to those that display full implementation of early childhood best practices. We are proud to be a 5 STAR school and have been for many, many years.

Our Village

3.0 Our Village

As you know, it takes a Village! Collaborating to support the growth and development of our families, staff, students, and broader community is at the heart of our cooperative school. In order to provide the best possible experience for each member of our community, families proactively partner with the teaching staff to bridge home and school experiences. And, every family supports the school by spending time in the classroom, contributing to committee or leadership work, and participating in decision-making.



3.1 The Family Teacher Partnership

3.1.1 Building a Bridge

Beginning school is often the first time children are learning to be independent from their family. Developing social skills in a group environment and finding security away from their family are important social-emotional goals for the preschool years. Children will negotiate this bridge most successfully if they have a sense that families and teachers are working together as trusted partners. At Saxon Hill we believe that families and teachers have equal and complementary skills to bring to this endeavor. Collectively our teachers have over seven decades of experience with preschool-age children! They have the perspective and education from which to understand the range of children's different developmental paths. Families bring a deep understanding of their child's interests, routines, experiences, play styles, fears, and how to comfort them. In addition, families have their own particular interests, life skills, and family traditions which contribute to their child's growth. When communication between families and teachers is mutual, the partnership creates a strong base of support for the child.

It is important to recognize that in some cases the values of Saxon Hill may not align with the values of an individual family. Should this occur, the Saxon Hill community expects immediate engagement with a staff member. Conversation regarding a conflict begins the work toward a resolution that maintains effective partnerships. When communication between families and teachers is open and honest our community thrives.



3.1.2 Home Visits

Teachers will visit your child at home sometime in the late summer. Please do not worry about how your home looks. It is just fine as is!!

These visits are an opportunity for:

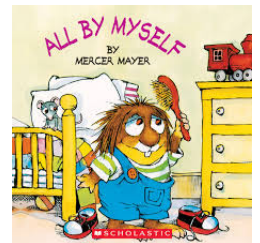
- your child to share their world with the teacher. Children often share favorite toys, favorite spaces, things they like to do.
- focusing on building a relationship between teachers and individual children.
- taking a picture of your child which will be used on their cubby and on other items.

As this visit is about building the child/teacher connection, there won't be time for parent/teacher in-depth conversations. If you have questions and things you want the teachers to know about your child, feel free to call or email to make an appointment to visit with the teacher. Your hopes and concerns are important!

3.1.3 Supporting Independence

One of our most important goals is to help children feel competent. To this end, we ask that you help us by encouraging your child to do routine tasks themselves. We will ask that each child:

- Hang up their backpack on one of the hooks.
- Take off outdoor clothes and hang them up on the cubby hook.
- Change their outdoor shoes/boots for indoor footwear.
- Wash hands with correct hygiene procedure (using soap and water/scrub for 20 seconds/dry with paper towel/put the towel in the wastebasket.)



When your child needs to use the toilet, we ask that you help us to move toward independence in this area. Encourage your child to do as much as they can:

- Undressing
- Climbing on/off the toilet (there is a stool if the toilet seat is too high)
- Flushing the toilet
- Dressing
- Washing hands

We expect that some children will have “accidents”. Please be sure that there is a change of clothes including underwear, socks, shirts, and pants in your child's cubby.

Please, please, please label your child's clothes.

3.1.4 Sharing Traditions and Culture

Saxon Hill embraces diversity. We encourage families to share their special holiday traditions, their culture, and other unique aspects of family life. We love to learn, and we feel that it is important that children be exposed to different ways of being. Saxon Hill does not encourage in-class celebrations of holidays except as educational experiences of diversity. The one exception to this is the card exchange, in some classrooms, around Valentine's Day which we celebrate as a day of friendship. Teachers will let you know specific details of the planned celebrations.



3.1.5 Communication

Communication is the key to successful partnerships. Developing a communication system that works for both you and the teacher is critical to building a strong partnership. Please let us know what works best for you in terms of frequency, format, etc.

Because the beginnings and ends of days are particularly busy for teachers, this may not be an optimal time for positive communication. Beginning and end of day communications that are helpful:

- If your child has had a difficult morning/evening
- New or unexpected events that are occurring in your family
- If you would like to set up a time to talk with the teacher
- Teachers will always let you know if your child has had an accident and/or if there has been any incident of note during the day.

Teachers will routinely communicate with families. Formal conferences will be offered in the fall and spring. Teachers will regularly communicate and update families on current activities, classroom happenings, and are always available for communication by phone, text, email, or a scheduled face-to-face conference.

We also have a [Current Family Page](#) on our website that contains links to LOTS of helpful information.

3.2 Member Family Obligations

3.2.1 Family Helping

Family helping is a very special time for you and for your child. In August/September the class PAL creates the rotating, daily family helping schedule for the entire year. The Family Helper can be a parent, grandparent, other family member, or special (adult) friend to the student. Helping in the class is a terrific opportunity to get to know the program, the staff, the child, and the child's peers. It's also a great opportunity to explore your playful side!

 <u>1. Provide snack for the class</u> <u>*Nut free</u>	 <u>2. Interact with the children</u>	 <u>3. Clean classroom & bathroom</u>
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Click on each Family Helper job to learn more!

At no time is a family helper or visitor to be left alone with children (except for the family helper's own child). Family Helpers do not count in state-regulated teacher to student ratios.

The only **younger siblings** permitted in the classroom while family helping are infants that can be worn in carriers by their caregiver. Toddlers are a distraction from Please reach out to your Saxon Hill School community for assistance with younger siblings during family helping; many families are happy to assist one another.

Alumni helpers (former students) are great for the children who often learn best from someone "just a little bit older"; however, some alumni helpers need more teacher assistance/guidance than others. Please plan visits with the teacher.

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and prospective families are welcome to visit. However, teachers prioritize maintaining a classroom that is child focused and, therefore, not too overloaded with adults. This just means that it helps to have things scheduled in advance.

3.2.2 Leadership and Committee Work

Families share in the responsibility for the upkeep of the equipment, facilities and systems of Saxon Hill School. All families are assigned to either a leadership position or a committee.



Here is a list of current committee & leadership assignments.

(Link To be added this coming fall)

The Operations Board manages the property, affairs, and business of Saxon Hill School. Visit our [Operations Board Handbook](#) to learn more about the roles, responsibilities and SHS by-laws.

The Leadership Council supports the educational experience of the students and families of Saxon Hill School. Visit our [Leadership Council Handbook](#) to learn more about their roles, responsibilities and details of our committees.

Families are also expected to respond, when possible, to community and staff requests for assistance that arise throughout the year. For example, all families may be asked to support fundraising activities and facilities projects, or the Leadership Council may seek the assistance of community members with specific skills.

3.2.3 Membership Meetings and Voting

There are three Full Membership Meetings (FMM) each school year. An adult representative of every family is expected to attend to stay apprised of school happenings and participate in conducting Saxon Hill School business. This is an adult only event, with the exception of infants. ***Please review the school calendar and save the dates!***



August FMM

- Meet with your classroom teacher and PAL for important information re: parent helping, specific classroom routines and other start of school information.
- Meet as full membership for introductions & important information
- Meet with your committee for introductions, to share contact information and begin discussing duties.

January FMM

- Budget presentation, tuition changes & any policy changes for the coming year
- Director of Education updates
- Committee Updates
- Vote on budget

March FMM

- Appoint members of the Leadership Council for the following year and Operations Board members, when needed
- Committee updates
- Enrollment updates



3.2.4 Leadership Council and Operations Board Meetings (optional)

Families are welcome to attend Operations Board and Leadership Council meetings. Committee Chairs or representatives may be invited to present at a meeting from time to time.

There are approximately five Operations Board meetings each year. Leadership Council meetings are held approximately once per month. Notice of all meetings & meeting minutes will be in the PAL communications. Handbooks containing the details and procedures of the Operations Board and Leadership Council are available for all members to access.

Our School Day

4.0 Our School Day

4.1 Program Details

Program	Age Requirement	Meeting Days	Meeting Times	Number of Children	Number of Teachers	Family Helper
Blue Class	3 by 9/1	M, W, F	8:30 - 12:00	16	2	1
Green Class	3 by 9/1	Tu, Th, F	8:30 - 12:00	16	2	1
Rainbow Class*	4 by 9/1	M, Tu, W, Th	8:30 - 12:00	16	2	1
Extended Discovery (ED)	3 by 9/1	M - F	12:00 - 4:30	13	2	0

*The 4 Day program is also a Vermont state-licensed Kindergarten

4.2 Daily Experiences

4.2.1 Attendance

If your child is going to be absent, late, needs to leave early for an appointment, or if someone other than the usual family adult is picking up your child, **please text** your child's teacher.



Per state regulations, **please sign in/out with the time and your initials** on the daily attendance sheet on the clipboard for the classroom.

Saxon Hill is required to report attendance to the student's school district, and to notify the district if a student is absent for more than 10 consecutive school days. If your child has been absent for more than 10 consecutive school days, you may be at risk of losing your Act 166 funding or having it reduced. The school district may follow up with the program and the family regarding the circumstances surrounding an extended absence and will determine whether or not funding is affected. The Director of Education will attempt to proactively meet with families who may need assistance in overcoming attendance barriers.



4.2.2 Arrival Routines

- Parent Helper Family arrives by 8:15am
- Families may enter the school at 8:20am
- Backpack is hung in the cubby
- Child uses the bathroom
- Child arrival task. The Blue and Green classes have a Question of the Day and the Rainbow Classes has a writing task. The task is to be done under guidance and supervision from the family member.
- Child prepares to play outside (gear or sunscreen, etc)
- Walk to the playground with your child to say good-bye.
- Adult sign-in (time/initials)

Note: Generally one teacher stays inside to greet families during arrival. The other teacher will be on the playground at 8:30 to receive your child. Even if families arrive early, they must wait until 8:30 to leave the child in our care.

4.2.3 Supporting Drop-off Routines

The school day begins at 8:30. Arriving on time provides children access to the full benefits of their school day, helps establish routines, and contributes to self-regulation. As partners, we want to support the children in feeling the safety and comfort of the routine where they know just what to do.

Some children are anxious about saying goodbye to their family members. Below are some suggestions to help with the transition to school.

- Ask your child how they are feeling about going to school.
- If they are nervous, anxious, or sad, honor those feelings. "I hear that you are feeling _____. Thank you for sharing that with me. I am always here to listen to how you are feeling."
- "I know going to school/leaving me/home might make you uncomfortable/_____, and I also know that together we can do this."
- "Your teacher will be there for you and will take very good care of you. You can be with them and talk to them whenever you want or need to. I trust them to take good care of you."
- Help your child create a brief drop off routine or ritual, and practice it for several days before the first day of school. For example, "first we hug, then we fist bump 3 times, then we blow two kisses to each other. Then I will go. I (or whoever it will be) will be here to pick you up at the end of school/at the end of Extended Discovery."

- The key is to follow through on the routine and be sure to leave when you finish it even if your child appears to be having a difficult transition. Though it may seem counterintuitive, it's actually better for your child if you leave at that point. You are sending the message that you know they can do it, that you trust their teachers to take care of them, and that everything will be okay.

It is our experience that even if children are crying when you leave, they usually are okay and ready to join with other children after a few minutes of special teacher time. When you are able to say goodbye with confidence, children learn that you trust them and their teachers.

4.2.4 Morning Experiences

- **Meeting:** greeting, talk about plans for the day, share experiences, books
- **Movement & Music:** yoga, mindfulness, dancing, singing with finger-plays, musical instruments
- **Co-op Groups:** small groups, guided exploration, work on the acquisition of specific skills, interest inspired projects, on-going projects or play may last several weeks
- **Choice Time:** children pursue personal interests and interact with peers; adults observe, pose questions, model exploration and problem-solving, document discoveries; classroom and outside environments intentionally set up to support development in all domains
- **Outdoor Exploration:** integrated, opened-ended, and guided exploration throughout the day. This may include time on and off the playground including in the woods, Mills Riverside Park, and the greater school grounds.
- **Snack:** children take charge of setup and cleanup, use ceramic plates and glass cups, learn to pour. Adults sit and eat with children and engage in conversation with them.
- **Clean-up:** children share responsibility for classroom organization/cleanup



4.2.5 Extended Discovery Experiences

- **Lunch:** children bring their own lunch
- **Rest:** nap or quiet time
- **Choice Time:** children explore their interests through various play experiences including art, building, make believe play and more.
- **Snack:** children bring their own snack
- **Meeting:** stories, fingerplays and songs

- **Continued Outdoor Play:** additional playground exploration, walks to the nearby park or forest playground, sledding



4.3 Clothing

We encourage independence so please choose items that are manageable for your child.

- **School clothing WILL** get messy or dirty, choose items accordingly
- Hard-soled **shoes or slippers** are required inside (per regulation), can leave in cubby
- A decent sized **backpack** allows for more independence
- Full change of clothing to keep in cubby (i.e., underwear, pants, shirt, socks)
- **Please label all clothing** so that found items can be returned to the correct cubby
- We do have extra clothing on hand for emergencies. Our items are labeled with *SHS*. **Please clean & return any school items.**



4.4 Outdoor Gear

We go outside daily unless the weather is hazardous or dangerously inclement. The following items are required, in order for children to enjoy being outside in any type of weather.

Fall/Spring

- Rain pants & rain jacket with hood OR one piece rain suit
- Rain boots
- Mid- layer jacket
- Weather appropriate hat (sun, wind, temps.)
- Light mittens OR shell mittens

Winter

- Insulated waterproof snow jacket & snow pant OR insulated waterproof snowsuit
- snow mittens, Insulated waterproof
- snow boots, Insulated waterproof
- Balaclava or Neckwarmer (optional)

Mittens are preferred by teachers. Gloves (in any season) + little fingers create a challenge for teachers. As with all gear, please consider the level of independence the items allow your child.

4.5 Toys & Other Items From Home

Typically we ask that toys and favorite items stay at home as they can be unintentionally damaged or lost. Some children feel better having a special item with them at school. We will work towards keeping the item in the backpack so children can fully engage in their day. Please do not send anything to school that is too precious or irreplaceable.

4.6 Walking Field Trips

Walking field trips within our local community provide children with unique learning experiences, giving them an opportunity to make connections from the classroom to the world around them, and often providing a chance for children to conduct in-depth research about topics of interest.

Safety precautions will be used to safeguard children while on walking field trips. Staff will have on hand first-aid supplies, emergency contact information, and a communication device. Staff will work with families to address specific procedures for children with disabilities or special needs.



4.7 Health and Safety

4.7.1 Illness Policy

All families in our program must work as partners with each other and the staff to assure the healthiest possible environment for all. Remember, it serves no purpose to knowingly expose children and staff to illness when such exposure is avoidable. Children who are ill should be kept home. Notify your child's teachers that your child will be absent from school due to illness.

Our expectation is that children, family helpers and staff will be kept from school:

- until they have been on any antibiotic treatment for 24 hours and fever free for 24 hours
- until they are fever free for 24 hours (without fever reducing medications)
- if they exhibit excessive coughing
- if they exhibit continuous nasal discharge
- if they exhibit vomiting or diarrhea at all

If you are unsure if you should keep your child home, the following resources can help:

- [Signs and Symptoms of Illness Chart](#) from Child Care Licensing Regulations pp. 113- 122
- Your child's medical care provider

Staff may ask that you consult with a medical professional before making a decision about including or excluding a child from school. In addition to physical conditions, we must consider the needs of the child. No matter what the diagnosis, if a child feels miserable, clingy, or demands extensive one-on-one attention, they will be better off at home or alone with another caregiver. This alone may be the basis for staff requesting that families remove or keep a child from school. Families are expected to respect the staff member's opinion regarding whether the child's condition warrants exclusion from the program.

Please contact the Saxon Hill School Health Officer with questions at healthofficer@saxonhillschool.org

4.7.2 Handwashing

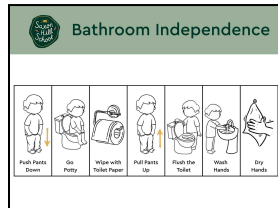
Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect you and your child from getting sick. Please practice proper handwashing with your child at home. At school we use the phrases *Bubble Mittens* and *Bubble Gloves* to encourage the rubbing of hands with soap



Click image for printable version

4.7.3 Toileting

We understand that some children may still be working on independent toileting. Please share your child's status with the teacher as well as the training process you have been using at home. Teachers try to stay consistent with home plans so that children can move forward with learning to use the toilet independently. For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, please see the Appendices for safety procedures re: diapers and pull-ups.



Click image for printable version

4.7.4 Nut-Free School

All families should become familiar with this section. The information provided is updated as professional medical recommendations change.

What foods should I avoid bringing into a nut-free environment?

Avoid sending any type of peanut or tree nut.

This includes: Almonds, Brazil nuts, Cashews, Chestnuts, Hazelnuts, Hickory nuts, Macadamia nuts, Pecans, Pine nuts, Pistachios, Walnuts

How do I know if a food is nut-free?

The best way to be sure if a food is nut-free is to **read the label and check the ingredient list.** Foods sold in the United States are required to state on their labels if the food contains peanuts or tree nuts (per the Food Allergy Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004).

After checking the ingredients list, look on the label for phrases like “may contain tree nuts” or “produced on shared equipment with tree nuts or peanuts.” Foods with these warnings on the label may be consumed by children without food allergies as these are unlikely to cause reactions in food allergic children from cross contamination (when eaten by other children).

It is OK to send in these foods for the shared snacks in the morning classrooms.

What about the snack Saxon Hill parents make at home?

We know that not all Saxon Hill family households are nut free. We trust that families will do their best to make snacks on washed surfaces with clean hands. It is OK to make/bake a nut free snack at home. You do not need to use special ingredients labeled Nut Free, as long as the above requirements are met. (No nuts or tree nut ingredients.)

If a parent of a child with nut allergens does not want their child eating the homemade/prepared shared snack, they must let the Saxon Hill staff know and provide them with a snack.

What about lunches and snacks in the Extended Day Program?

Snacks and lunches in ED are not shared but must also be nut free. As explained above, foods labeled “may contain tree nuts” or “produced on shared equipment with tree nuts or peanuts” are allowed.



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of this information*

4.7.5 Food Allergies and Food Safety

Families of a student with a food allergy, along with teachers, and the Health Officer will create a partnership to prevent food reactions at school. Teachers need to be informed about a food allergy in order to: 1) Avoid or prevent food allergic reactions 2) Recognize a reaction should one occur 3) Respond quickly.

By working together and communicating clearly and frequently, staff and the student's family will create an environment that allows the student to grow and learn and, most of all, be safe while at school.

Families will provide Saxon Hill with an allergy medication form that has been filled out by their physician. All allergy response medications will be brought to school whenever the child is present. Medications must travel wherever the child goes at all times (i.e. to the playground, walking trips). All staff are required to have Epipen training. All Epipens are labeled with a child's name and dated, and stored out of reach of children.

Families, Staff and the Health Officer will work together, prior to the August full membership meeting, to outline a plan of action for the school year that will include:

- Notifying all staff and families at Saxon Hill of the allergy and offending food on a need to know basis
- How to recognize the symptoms of an allergic reaction
- What past reactions have been
- Medications that are administered if child is exposed to offending food
- How to administer the medications

This action plan will be reviewed mid-year by family, staff, and the health officer.

Staff and volunteers ensure that snacks are properly cleaned and refrigerated, and will discard food with expired dates.



4.7.6 Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Because children spend a lot of time outdoors, Saxon Hill recommends the use of sun protective clothing, sunscreen, hats and sunglasses. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, sunscreen should have UVB and UVA protection of at least SPF 15. When in the woods, we recommend the use of insect repellent. Families are to apply sunscreen to their child before dropping them off for the day. Teachers, assistants, and family-helpers will reapply sunscreen with your consent if children are outside for longer than two hours at a time. Similarly, staff will apply bug spray if deemed necessary for a particular outdoor activity, as requested. **Please provide your preferred bug spray and sunblock to your child's teacher and clearly mark it with your child's name.** If your child is allergic to sunscreen/repellent, please be sure to include this information on enrollment paperwork.



4.7.7 School Calendar

Our school calendar is based on the Mount Mansfield Unified Union Supervisory Union (MMUUSD) school calendar. Our calendar does not match MMUUSD's exactly so please look carefully. We base our amount of student days on ACT 166 requirements. You can locate our calendar on the [Current Families](#) page of our website.



4.7.8 Emergency Closures

In the case of weather events or other emergency conditions, Saxon Hill follows Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District (MMUUSD) school closures and delays. School **closures will be posted on the WCAX** website/App as soon as possible, in the morning.

- In the event of an MMUUSD school closure SHS will close.
- In the event of an MMUUSD delayed opening SHS will open at 9:30am. This time is consistent with the opening of the local elementary schools. It is

understood that some families may be delayed due to multiple drop offs or parking lot traffic.

- In the event of an MMUUSD cancellation or early closure of after school childcare programs the Extended Discovery program will cancel or close early, as well. Families will be contacted.

Extension of school programs up to one week due to unscheduled closings shall be the decision of the Operations Board and decided before April 1st.

4.7.9 River Safety

Due to the strict state regulations we do not enter Browns River or the pond in Mills Riverside Park.

4.7.10 Medical and Dental Emergencies

In response to a medical or dental emergency for children or adults the procedure for staff will be as follows:

- **Dial 911** for emergency transportation and escort for individuals requiring immediate medical attention
- Access your family's Jovial account to determine primary source of medical or dental care
- Access relevant health insurance information and permission for emergency treatment/transportation (in your Jovial account)
- Access individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems that may require special care in an emergency
- A CPR/First Aid certified teacher will accompany all children who are transported

4.7.11 Additional Health and Safety policies in the Appendices:

- Procedures for Standard Precautions (bodily fluids)
- Toy Cleaning
- Water table
- Animals
- Smoking
- Health Consultant
- Yearly Water Testing for Lead

4.8 Security and Supervision

4.8.1 Photo/Video Policy

Teachers regularly use photos or videos from the school day as a method of communication with parents. Occasionally Saxon Hill uses some of these photos and videos of a child or children for school-related purposes, such as school publicity, teacher training, social media or a slide show at a Saxon Hill event. Saxon Hill School maintains a website & social media pages (Facebook & Instagram) which provide

information for prospective as well as current families. Photos of children engaged in school activities are a great way of conveying the true nature of our school - its philosophy, environment, daily activities, art materials, etc.

NO child's name will EVER be used on the web site or social media. A picture or video clip of your child will only be used for the aforementioned purposes if you sign the written release.



4.8.2 Personal Photographs

Any photograph or video that includes any person (or part of a person) other than your own child(ren) cannot be copied, distributed, printed or published, or used on any personal or other web site (including social media platforms) without written permission of the other adults and the parent or legal guardian of any other child in that photograph/video. **We ask families to refrain from taking photos while Family Helping.**

4.8.3 Security and Supervision Policy

Your child's safety at school is very important to us. We have several procedures in place to help ensure this safety.

- Please access the school through the Saxon Hill main door by utilizing your unique family code.
- All staff members are required to wear an identification badge.
- Procedures are in place to secure or evacuate the building in case of an emergency.
- The state of Vermont requires a monthly fire drill practice.
- Copies of the [Saxon Hill Emergency Response Plan](#) are located in each classroom, the entryway and in each bathroom. It is reviewed by staff annually and updated as needed.
- The [Saxon Hill Emergency Preparedness Plans](#) are located in 6.2 Appendix B

Children are supervised in all areas by sight and sound by staff and family helpers. **Family members and caregivers are responsible for supervising children before and after class time.** Children are not allowed to venture outside without an adult present. Please supervise younger siblings during pick up/drop off. Also, your community is here to help. There are lots of adults here who would LOVE to hold a baby or play peek-a-boo with a toddler while you help your preschooler get ready for the playground.

Families/caregivers are responsible for making sure that the gates to the playground are securely closed upon entrance and exit.

See the Appendices to locate the following Security and Supervision policies:

- Weapons Policy
- Child Abuse/Neglect policy
- Criminal background check
- CBCCPP Licensing regulations and childcare consumer line

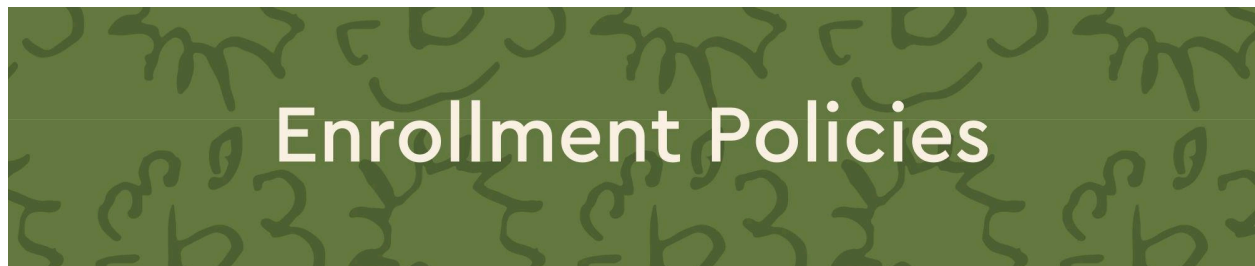
4.9 Confidentiality

Saxon Hill expects all staff and volunteers to maintain confidentiality for students and families. Staff should refrain from sharing information about individual children and their development with persons other than their families or caregivers. Family helpers are expected to keep confidential what they may see or hear about families, children, or a child's development.

Medical records for each child will be reviewed by the Head Teacher, Director of Education, and Saxon Hill Health Officer, and will be kept confidential in a confidential Jovial file. Saxon Hill staff will share legally required information with agencies listed on the Consent to Release Form.

Families may have access to their children's records, including screening and assessment results, upon request. All records will be kept in a confidential Jovial file. Non-medical records and informal assessments may be shared among Saxon Hill Staff in order to identify strategies for supporting a child's learning and development, identify needs for outside support, and as a teaching tool. A parent/guardian must sign a records release authorization prior to Saxon Hill sharing records with an outside agency, school district, or consultant.

Personnel files are confidential and will be kept in a locked and/or digital file by the Director of Education.



5.0 Enrollment Policies

5.1 Commitment to the Cooperative

Before enrolling your child at Saxon Hill School, it is important that you recognize and embrace our cooperative structure: Family Helping, active participation in a committee or leadership position, and collaborative decision-making are required of all families. These are foundational to our educational philosophy and critical to the school's success. For more information please see Section 3.2, Member Family Obligations.

5.2 Registration Policies and Procedures

Children must be 3 years old by September 1 in order to register for a spot in a 3 Day Class. Children must be 4 years old by September 1 in order to register for a spot in the 4 Day Class. Class size will be recommended by the Director of Education and approved by the Board.

Children must register for a 3 Day or 4 Day class with the intention of attending all program days. Planned weekly absences are not supported.

Registration begins in late January and February. Registration dates will be agreed upon by the Operations Board. Jovial will be used to submit registration forms online. Families will indicate up to 3 class preferences on their registration form. Saxon Hill will not be responsible for incomplete or incorrectly submitted registration forms. Forms will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis within each registration week and priority level.

Registration chronology is as follows:

1. Week 1: Currently enrolled students and children of staff
2. Week 2: Siblings and alumni
3. Week 3: New families; open enrollment begins

Enrollment prioritization is as follows.

1. Students who are children of Saxon Hill staff.
2. Currently enrolled students staying in the same class.
3. Currently enrolled students moving to a different class.
4. New students with currently enrolled siblings or sibling alumni.
5. Children of a parent who attended Saxon Hill.
6. Students who are new to the school with no staff, sibling, or alumni relationship.

There is an \$80 registration fee that is charged once a registration form is submitted. Registration fees are non-refundable. Registration fees must be waived or refunded to families receiving CCFAP tuition funds from the state of Vermont.

Each family submitting a registration form will receive an email from the Administrator that notifies them of their provisional enrollment or waitlist status and next steps to secure their spot.

Saxon Hill does not maintain a waitlist prior to the registration period. Once a program is full, families will be placed on a waitlist. If a spot opens up in a program, families will be offered the spot in the order they were placed on the waitlist. If a family is offered a spot, then they may:

1. Take a spot in the class.
2. Decline the spot and be removed from the waitlist.
3. Decline the spot and be placed at the bottom of the waitlist.

5.2.1 Concurrent Enrollment in other Preschool Communities

As a deliberately part-time preschool program, Saxon Hill School provides a supportive and challenging learning environment with predictable rhythms and expectations. We know other high quality preschool programs do the same in their own unique ways. We have learned from experience that families in two robust programs, who are not specifically informed about the unique demands of our family cooperative structure, can find the experience challenging. Please schedule a meeting with the Director of Education to discuss how your family might manage the commitment to multiple communities.

5.2.2 Age Waiver for Incoming Students

It is possible for a family to request a waiver for their child to enroll at Saxon Hill if the child turns 3 years of age after the age cutoff of September 1. Should there be available openings in either of the 3-Day classrooms after July 1, we will extend offers of enrollment to children turning 3 by September 30. This waiver is not granted for children whose birthdays are after September 30.

The child may not attend class until after the child's birthday, per Saxon Hill's licensing requirements.

Per Act 166, children are to be 3, 4 or 5 on or before September 1 in order to receive state tuition dollars. For incoming students with age waivers, full tuition will be required for the year, since Act 166 funds will not be available until the following school year. Tuition will not be prorated based on a later start date for students with age waivers.

5.2.3 Age Waiver for Currently Enrolled Students

If an opening occurs during the school year (September - May) in one program, staff members may initiate a recommendation (with family agreement) to waive the age required if there is evidence that a currently enrolled child's needs would be better met in a different program.

5.2.4 Extended Discovery Registration

Enrollment for the Extended Discovery (ED) program happens in conjunction with registration into the morning classes. Children who are enrolled in ED will attend this program on each of their morning preschool days.

Registration for the ED program is for the entire school year. Withdrawal from ED follows the same process as with withdrawal from a morning program. Should a family decide to add ED to their schedule during the school year, and spots are open, they may begin attending with the approval of the Administrator. ED follows the school year calendar with one exception: it may have a "soft start" during the first week of the school year so that children can ease into their new school year routine.

When registration season begins, it follows a priority system whereby Current Families, then Alumni Families, then New Families are invited to register during

designated weeks in late January and early February. After the designated week for New Families has passed, Open Enrollment is in effect. During Open Enrollment, families are enrolled on a first-come, first-served basis.

During Open Enrollment, if a family desires to enroll in the Morning Program + ED and spots are available in both, they will be enrolled in the Morning Program + ED. If no ED spots are available, or less than a full week of ED is available, but there are openings in the Morning Program, families will be offered a Morning Program spot and will be placed on a waiting list for a full week of ED. They will be enrolled in ED in the order they were placed on the waitlist as spots open up that allow their child to attend ED for a full week.

In August, families on the ED waitlist will be offered any open spots remaining, even if there are fewer spots than allow for a full week of ED. If there are any open slots in the Extended Discovery program that are not desired by anyone already on the waitlist, the remaining Saxon Hill families will have the option enrolling for individual days that remain open. If demand exceeds the amount of open spots a lottery system could be used. Families chosen in the lottery may opt to register for 1,2 or 3 days/week.

5.2.5 Summer Camp Registration

Summer Camp registration will open on a date determined by the Administrator, with agreement by the Director of Education and the Operations Board. Children must be between the ages of 3 and 6 years old to attend a Summer Camp. Registration occurs by week. Jovial will be used to submit registration forms online. Saxon Hill will not be responsible for incomplete or incorrectly submitted registration forms. Forms will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Each family submitting a registration form will receive an email from the Administrator that notifies them of their enrollment or waitlist status and next steps.

Open Enrollment for Summer Camps will last as long as there are spots available in a given camp.

5.3 Tuition Policy and Procedures

Families are responsible for making their tuition payments on time according to the tuition payment schedule. The amount of tuition due will be determined by the Board and approved by the Full Membership during a January Full Membership Meeting. Families will use Jovial to pay their tuition online, unless other arrangements are made with the Board Treasurer.

Saxon Hill School remains committed to quality education. It is a non-profit institution, and like any other school, has expenses and financial responsibilities that must be met on time. Therefore, the following tuition payment guidelines must be met:

- Saxon Hill School has a partial tuition payment ("Deposit") due upon enrollment. This payment is a nonrefundable payment that will hold your child's position in class for the following school year.

- Saxon Hill School will not refund tuition payments for time periods including, and not limited to: absences for medical illness, exclusion because of under-immunization; emergency closures; or family vacation.

5.3.1 Deposits

A partial tuition payment (deposit) is due upon enrollment for each student registered at that time for the upcoming school year. This payment is a non-refundable deposit intended to secure the child's position in the class concerned for that year, and applies to all families, including those receiving Act 166 funding and those who are receiving Tuition Assistance from the school. No deposit is required for the Extended Discovery Program.

Families receiving CCFAP tuition assistance from the State of Vermont may have their deposit due date changed or waived based on the results of their application to the state. In some cases Vermont may not allow CCFAP funds to be used for deposits; in these cases a separate deposit may not be legally allowed. The Administrator will work with each family to answer questions related to CCFAP.



5.3.2 Tuition

The remaining tuition (minus the deposit paid) will be divided into equal monthly payments according to a tuition payment schedule. Monthly tuition payments are due on the 10th of each month, beginning September 10 and ending May 10, for a total of 9 monthly payments. Saxon Hill uses an online system called Jovial for online tuition payments. A family will receive access to a personalized Jovial Family Portal once their child is enrolled. This portal is used to submit payments; it also provides a full history of payments owed and paid. Tuition payments can be made ahead of time in any schedule a family may desire, as long as the minimum monthly payment schedule is met. Extended Discovery tuition payments are made in conjunction with morning program payments.

Payments are due by the established due dates. If payment is not received by the due date, the school will contact the family about entering into a payment plan over a specified period of time. Failure to adhere to this plan may result in withdrawal of the student from the school.

Saxon Hill School realizes that families can experience unforeseen financial difficulties. Families should contact the Treasurer as soon as possible to discuss payment options and make alternate arrangements if needed.

5.3.3 Summer Camp

Summer camp tuition is calculated on a per child, per week basis. A deposit is due upon enrollment. The remaining tuition is due on a date set by the Registrar. If payment is not received by the due date, the child may be withdrawn and the opening offered to another child.

5.3.4 Withdrawal

A family who withdraws after payment of the tuition deposit will forfeit its non-refundable deposit payment. We do not prorate monthly tuition. Families who withdraw in good financial standing have no further tuition obligation, however, a donation request letter will be sent from the Operations Board Secretary, encouraging the family to consider an exit donation to our non-profit organization.

5.3.5 Tuition Assistance

Given Saxon Hill School's limited financial aid resources, it is **required** that families apply for tuition assistance through Act 166 and CCFAP prior to applying for assistance from the school fund. Funds received through Act 166, CCFAP, and/or Saxon Hill tuition assistance will be deducted from the total unfunded tuition; any remaining tuition funds due will be collected according to the payment schedule.

5.4 Tuition Assistance

5.4.1 Act 166: Vermont's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program

Through Act 166, all 3 to 5 year-olds in Vermont can receive 10 hours of universal prekindergarten (pre-K) per week from pre-qualified programs for 35 weeks of a school year. High-quality early learning experiences are available to eligible families regardless of family income or circumstance. Saxon Hill School maintains its qualification with the State of Vermont so that our students are able to participate in this program.

5.4.2 Act 166 Eligibility

- Children must be between 3 and 5 years old on September 1.
- Families must register their child with their local school district each year.
- Children can only receive Act 166 funding for one program per year.

Per Act 166, children are to be 3, 4 or 5 years old on or before September 1 in order to receive state tuition dollars. Act 166 funds will not be available for incoming 2-year-old students with age waivers; therefore full tuition will be required for the full year. Students who turn 6 years old during the school year will lose access to Act 166 funds on their birthday and will need to pay full tuition for the remainder of the school year.

Saxon Hill partners with local school districts to obtain Act 166 funding and bills them directly for those funds at various points during the year. Although Saxon Hill periodically verifies that students enrolled in our school are also registered with the school district concerned, it is the family's responsibility (and not the school's) to register their child with their local school district to obtain this funding. Each school

district has a unique process for registering students for Act 166 funds. School district websites should be consulted to determine the correct process.

Families who are not receiving Act 166 funding for any reason will be responsible for payment of the full amount of tuition, including the amount which would have otherwise been funded by the school district. Any child enrolled in a particular class at Saxon Hill but not registered for Act 166 funding with the applicable school district will be deemed to be not receiving such funding. Should such a child subsequently become registered, any full tuition payments already made to Saxon Hill may be refunded or otherwise adjusted by the Treasurer on a case-by-case basis.

5.4.3 Directing Act 166 Funds

Act 166 tuition funds can only be used by one prekindergarten program each year per family. Families attending two private programs in separate schools will need to direct their Act 166 funds to one of the programs. In cases where a family directs their Act 166 funds to a program other than Saxon Hill, the family will need to pay full tuition to Saxon Hill for the school year. In the case where a child is simultaneously enrolled in a public school preschool as well as Saxon Hill School, the child is ineligible for Act 166 funds.

5.4.4 Absences

Saxon Hill is required to report attendance to the student's school district, and to notify the district if a student is absent for more than 10 consecutive school days. If your child has been absent for more than 10 consecutive school days, you may be at risk of losing your Act 166 funding or having it reduced. The school district may follow up with the program and the family regarding the circumstances surrounding an extended absence and will determine whether or not funding is affected. The Director of Education will attempt to proactively meet with families who may need assistance in overcoming attendance barriers.

5.4.5 Moving Between School Districts; Other Living Circumstances

Since Act 166 funding is sent to Saxon Hill from local school districts, families who have moved from one district to another must notify Saxon Hill of the move. Saxon Hill will then submit the necessary forms to stop requesting funds from the old school district and start requesting funds from the new district.

If you are living with family or friends, experiencing homelessness, or have a different citizenship status, your child is still eligible. Contact the school or Supervisory Union district where you are living and they can help you access Act 166 funds.

5.4.6 Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)

The Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) helps Vermont children access regulated and quality care by covering some or all child care costs for eligible families. For example, a family of four earning \$124,800 per year qualifies. Families in the program pay a weekly family share. Family shares range from \$0 to \$250 based on family size and income. Vermont then pays for some or all child care costs minus the determined family share amount.

Families can apply for CCFAP assistance for any of the programs offered by Saxon Hill, including morning programs, afternoon programs, and summer camps. Families receiving Act 166 funding from their local school district are still eligible to apply for CCFAP funds.

Information and applications can be found at the Vermont Department of Children and Families CCFAP website (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ccfap>).

5.4.7 Saxon Hill School Tuition Assistance

Saxon Hill is proud to offer tuition assistance for our programs. If a family is not awarded or not awarded enough assistance through Act 166 or CCFAP to be able to attend Saxon Hill School, they may utilize a financial aid application found on the Saxon Hill website. Any tuition assistance money awarded will reduce the remaining tuition balance and be applied equally to all installment payments. The Treasurer will send out a letter outlining the amount of the award and the payment schedule options. All families applying for Tuition Assistance are still responsible for the April non-refundable deposit (unless CCFAP awards disallow the collection of a deposit).

Families receiving Act 166 funding from their local school district are still eligible to apply for Saxon Hill Tuition Assistance after applying for CCFAP. Act 166 funding combined with CCFAP funds and Saxon Hill tuition assistance funding shall not exceed the total tuition due. In those cases where combined funding would exceed the total tuition due, Saxon Hill will adjust the tuition assistance amount offered.

5.4.8 Application Process for Saxon Hill Tuition Assistance

Applications will be submitted in confidence to the Treasurer. The deadline for tuition assistance requests is April 1 for all families registered by this date. Those families who accept registration at a later date will be given a deadline by the Treasurer. Requests for summer camps will be considered on a rolling basis.

The Operations Board will evaluate applicants equitably. Family names and details will remain confidential, in light of the funding available. The Treasurer will notify applicants of tuition assistance decisions. If Board members responsible for reviewing tuition assistance apply for aid themselves, the application will be reviewed by the other members.

The philosophy at Saxon Hill School is to put the needs of the child first. In keeping, the Operations Board members will decide tuition assistance cases in a manner consistent with our school's overall philosophy.

5.4.9 Source of Saxon Hill tuition assistance funds

Our tuition assistance comes from two scholarship funds: The Dee Dee Jamison Fund and the Michele Campbell Fund. Donations to these scholarship funds are welcome at any time and can be made via the Donations Page on the Saxon Hill website.

Appendices

6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A: Health Safety Policies and Procedures (per VT CDD regulation)

6.1.1 Toileting and Diapers

For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the program asks that children have and use disposable diapers or pull ups (in cubby with change of clothes), unless the child has a medical issue that does not permit use. Soiled diapers are placed in a plastic bag, with a secured tie and placed in the trash can. Toileting and diapering are to be assisted by Saxon Hill staff and not by classroom helpers (unless it is their own child).

6.1.2 Procedures for Standard Precautions (Bodily Fluids)

Surfaces that may come in contact with infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of material that can be sanitized. Staff and volunteers use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or of openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and that reduce the spread of infectious disease.

When spills of body fluids occur, staff and volunteers clean them up immediately with detergent followed by water rinsing. After cleaning, staff and volunteers sanitize non-porous surfaces by using the procedure for sanitizing in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table (which is posted in each classroom). Staff and volunteers clean rugs and carpeting by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and arrange for shampooing or steam cleaning with the Cleaning Committee. Staff and volunteers dispose of contaminated materials and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in closed container.

6.1.3 Toy Cleaning

A toy that is placed in a child's mouth, or otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion is to be washed by hand using water and detergent, rinsed, sanitized and air dried, before it is used again. Toys will be cleaned weekly by weekend cleaners per staff recommendation.

6.1.4 Water Table

No child is allowed to drink the water from the water table, and children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play. The water table is filled with fresh potable water. Staff and volunteers are required to drain the water table after each class uses the table, and wipe down the basin with a bleach or sanitizing solution.

6.1.5 Animals

No fur bearing animals except domestic animals with proof of rabies vaccination will be allowed at Saxon Hill. Children and adults will be required to wash their hands after handling an animal. We ask that people do not bring their pets inside or outside of the school, including the grass area near the play yard, without advanced approval from the teacher. The pet must be under the strict supervision of the adult at all times. Visiting domestic animals must be fully immunized and be suitable for contact with children, documented from a veterinarian. Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk for salmonella infection.

Staff will supervise all interactions between children and animals to instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals, at school or while on field trips. Staff will make sure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal, at school or while on field trips.

6.1.6 Smoking+

The use of all tobacco and nicotine products is prohibited on these premises. This includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, pipes, electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, and smokeless tobacco.

6.1.7 Health Consultant

A Child Care Wellness Consultant is a pediatric health professional trained in health and safety standards and best practices for young children. They will visit the school twice a year to observe and review program practices, and make recommendations about health policies to ensure health promotion and prevention of infection and injury. They would ensure that children with special health needs have access to the resources they need and our staff has the training they need to care for children. They will review each child's file to check for up to date immunizations and health screening.

6.1.8 Yearly Water Testing for Lead

Saxon Hill receives yearly water test results from MMUUSD. Should lead be found in the drinking water, families will be notified and we will switch to bottled water until the issue is resolved.

6.2 Appendix B: Emergency Response and Preparedness

6.2.1 Reducing the Potential Threat of Emergencies

In order to reduce the potential for emergencies, review the following checklist annually.

- Smoke detection systems are checked yearly by MMUUSD.
- Ensure that the landlord regularly cleans and checks heating, cooling, gas and electrical systems.
- Test Carbon Monoxide detector monthly and replace batteries twice a year.
- Fire extinguishers are checked monthly by MMUUSD to ensure they are properly charged, mounted and easy to reach. Saxon Hill will train staff in use.
- Review our school environment for any obstructions that prevent safe exit.

Crisis Response Plan for the Underhill I.D. Building - includes procedures for the following (in order):

- Evacuation for Fire, Bomb Threat, Other Hazard
- Secure the Building
- Clear the Halls
- Relocation to Browns River Middle School
- Alternate Relocation off campus to Covered Bridge at Mills River Park
- Teacher Assistance Procedure

A building map is included in each Crisis Response Plan packet, posted at all entrances to the school and on file with Emergency Responders (Fire, Police and Rescue).

6.2.2 Program Authority

The Head Teacher of each program is responsible for taking responsibility for students in their program and others in closest proximity.

A phone not requiring batteries is a requirement of this plan and must be kept on site. A cell phone is recommended but not required.

Emergency Supplies

The following emergency items should be on hand at Saxon Hill at all times:

- 1st Aid Kit
- Portable Radio and Batteries
- Multiple Flashlights and sets of Batteries
- Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Disposable Diapers, etc
- Blankets
- Telephone not requiring batteries or electricity

6.2.3 Water

At least 4 gallons of water must be stored within the school (in emergency tote). Date bottled water and replenish it once a year to keep it fresh. If additional non-potable water is required for flushing toilets, etc, the river water may be used. Note: Water from a potentially contaminated source can be purified for storage by adding 8 drops of chlorine bleach to every one gallon of water.

6.2.4 Food

Maintain a dated 24-hour emergency supply of non-perishable food (in emergency tote). Ensure all food meets regulations for snacks. Replace food annually to maintain freshness. Keep disposable bowls, utensils and manually operated can opener on hand.

6.2.5 Emergency Backpacks

The Saxon Hill Field Trip backpack will be used as the emergency backpack. All necessary items must be maintained in the backpack.

6.2.6 Security Threats

Security threats will be reported to the police and/or 911. Evacuation procedures will be followed if needed.

6.2.7 Natural Disasters

In the event of a natural disaster, staff will follow evacuation procedures as needed.

6.2.8 Utility Failure

For brief outages where child safety is not a concern, staff will contact appropriate utilities to determine whether an early dismissal is needed. If safety is an issue, evacuation procedures will be followed and families notified as appropriate.

6.2.9 Missing Children

In the case of a missing child, the Head Teacher will call 911, then notify the child's families, and the Director of Education. Staff will maintain appropriate adult-child ratios for the other children in the class, and will call other families if additional adult supervision is needed. If needed, families will be asked to pick up their children early from school.

6.2.10 Emergency Drills and Procedures

Emergency evacuation drills are practiced with the Underhill I.D. Building monthly by Saxon Hill students, staff and volunteers. All staff members are educated on the emergency response plan. This includes, locations of all emergency phone numbers, and contacts for students. All faculty are CPR and First Aid certified.

6.3 Appendix C: Safety Policies

6.3.1 CBCCPP Licencing Regulations and Childcare Consumer Line

A copy of the Vermont State Licencing Regulations can be found online at <https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/Licensing/CC-CenterBase-d-Regs.pdf> Or, a hard copy can be provided to you upon request.

Child Care Consumer Line

Call **1-800-649-2642** toll free in Vermont or email ahs.dcfcdchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov to:

- Get information about child care providers (e.g., when they became licensed, if they are accredited or have a STARS rating, and if they've had any licensing violations in the past year);
- Voice a concern about a provider (e.g., unregulated, lack of supervision, too many children, unqualified or not enough staff, inappropriate guidance and discipline, unsafe environment); or
- Make a formal complaint about a child care provider.

6.3.2 Weapons

All weapons are prohibited from the Saxon Hill environments. MMUUSD Weapons Guidelines state that any student who possesses, transfers, or brings a weapon on school property shall be subject to immediate removal.

The Saxon Hill board shall act to investigate and take appropriate action with regard to any incident or complaint involving a weapon at school. If it is determined, after an opportunity for a hearing with the board, that a student, family member, visitor or staff member violated this policy, that person shall be referred to a law enforcement agency and may be expelled from school for one calendar year.

6.3.3 Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students

Updated June 2023

I. Statement of Policy

Saxon Hill School, Inc (hereinafter "SHS") is committed to providing all of its students with a safe and supportive school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with respect.

It is the policy of SHS to prohibit the unlawful harassment of students based on race, color, religion, creed, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. Harassment may also constitute a violation of Vermont's Public Accommodations Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of

1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and/or Title IX of the federal Education Amendments Act of 1972.

It is also the policy of SHS to prohibit the unlawful hazing and bullying of students. Conduct which constitutes hazing may be subject to civil penalties.

SHS shall address all complaints of harassment, hazing and bullying according to the procedures accompanying this policy, and shall take appropriate action against any person - subject to the jurisdiction of the board - who violates this policy. Nothing herein shall be construed to prohibit punishment of a student for conduct which, although it does not rise to the level of harassment, bullying, or hazing as defined herein, otherwise violates one or more of the board's disciplinary policies or the school's code of conduct.

The Model Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students are expressly incorporated by reference as though fully included within this Model Policy. The Model Procedures are separated from the policy for ease of use as may be required.

II. Implementation

The presidents or his/her designee shall:

1. Adopt a procedure directing staff, parents and guardians how to report violations of this policy and file complaints under this policy. (See Model Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students)
2. Annually, select two or more designated employees to receive complaints of hazing, bullying and/or harassment at each school campus and publicize their availability in any publication of SHS that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for the school.
3. Designate an Equity Coordinator to oversee all aspects of the implementation of this policy as it relates to obligations imposed by federal law regarding discrimination. This role may be also be assigned to one or both of the Designated Employees.
4. Respond to notifications of possible violations of this policy in order to promptly and effectively address all complaints of hazing, harassment, and/or bullying.
5. Take action on substantiated complaints. In cases where hazing, harassment and/or bullying is substantiated, SHS shall take prompt and appropriate remedial action reasonably calculated to stop the hazing, harassment and/or bullying; prevent its recurrence; and to remedy the impact of the offending conduct on the victim(s), where appropriate. Such action may include a wide range of responses from education to serious discipline.

Serious discipline may include termination for employees and, for students, expulsion or removal from school property. It may also involve penalties or sanctions for both organizations and individuals who engage in hazing. Revocation or suspension of an organization's permission to operate or exist within SHS's purview may also be considered if that organization knowingly permits, authorizes or condones hazing.

III. Constitutionally Protected Speech

It is the intent of SHS to apply and enforce this policy in a manner that is consistent with student rights to free expression under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The purpose of this policy is to (1) prohibit conduct or communication that is directed at a person's protected characteristics as defined below and that has the purpose or effect of substantially disrupting the educational learning process and/or access to educational resources or creates a hostile learning environment; (2) prohibit

conduct intended to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate students in a manner as defined under this policy.

IV. Definitions.

For the purposes of this policy and the accompanying procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. **“Bullying”** means any overt act or combination of acts, including an act conducted by electronic means, directed against a student by another student or group of students and which:
 - a. Is repeated over time;
 - b. Is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and
 - c. (i) occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity, or before or after the school day on a school bus or at a school sponsored activity; or
(ii) does not occur during the school day on school property, on a school bus or at a school sponsored activity and can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's right to access educational programs.
- B. **“Complaint”** means an oral or written report information provided by a student or any person to an employee alleging that a student has been subjected to conduct that may rise to the level of hazing, harassment or bullying.
- C. **“Complainant”** means a student who has provided oral or written information about conduct that may rise to the level of hazing, harassment or bullying, or a student who is the target of alleged hazing, harassment or bullying.
- D. **“Designated employee”** means an employee who has been designated by the school to receive complaints of hazing, harassment and bullying pursuant to subdivision 16 V.S.A. 570a(a)(7). The designated employees for each school building are identified in Appendix A of this policy.
- E. **“Employee”** includes any person employed directly by or retained through a contract with SHS, an agent of the school, a school board member, a student teacher, an intern or a school volunteer. For purposes of this policy, “agent of the school” includes supervisory union staff.
- F. **“Equity Coordinator”** is the person responsible for implementation of Title IX (regarding sex-based discrimination) and Title VI (regarding race based discrimination) for SHS and for coordinating SHS's compliance with Title IX and Title VI in all areas covered by the implementing regulations. The Equity Coordinator is also responsible for overseeing implementation of SHS's Preventing and Responding to Harassment of Students and Harassment of Employees policies. This role may also be assigned to Designated Employees.
- G. **“Harassment”** means an incident or incidents of verbal, written, visual, or physical conduct, including any incident conducted by electronic means, based on or motivated by a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived race, creed, color, national origin, marital status disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, that has the purpose or effect of objectively and substantially undermining and detracting from or interfering with a student's educational performance or access to school resources or creating an objectively intimidating hostile, or offensive environment.

Harassment includes conduct as defined above and may also constitute one or more of the following:

- (1) Sexual harassment, which means unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, that includes sexual

violence/sexual assault, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, and includes situations when one or both of the following occur:

- (i) Submission to that conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a student's education, academic status, or progress; or
- (ii) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a student is used as a component of the basis for decisions affecting that student.

Sexual harassment may also include student-on-student conduct or conduct of a non-employee third party that creates a hostile environment. A hostile environment exists where the harassing conduct is severe, persistent or pervasive so as to deny or limit the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program on the basis of sex.

- (2) Racial harassment, which means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived race or color, and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, racial slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, and taunts on manner of speech and negative references to cultural customs.
- (3) Harassment of members of other protected categories, means conduct directed at the characteristics of a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived creed, national origin, marital status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and includes the use of epithets, stereotypes, slurs, comments, insults, derogatory remarks, gestures, threats, graffiti, display, or circulation of written or visual material, taunts on manner of speech, and negative references to customs related to any of these protected categories.

H. **"Hazing"** means any intentional, knowing or reckless act committed by a student, whether individually or in concert with others, against another student: In connection with pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization which is affiliated with the educational institution; and

- (1) Which is intended to have the effect of, or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of, endangering the mental or physical health of the student.

Hazing shall not include any activity or conduct that furthers legitimate curricular, extra-curricular, or military training program goals, provided that:

- (1) The goals are approved by the educational institution; and
- (2) The activity or conduct furthers the goals in a manner that is appropriate, contemplated by the educational institution, and normal and customary for similar programs at other educational institutions.

With respect to Hazing, **"Student"** means any person who:

- (A) is registered in or in attendance at an educational institution;
- (B) has been accepted for admission at the educational institution where the hazing incident occurs; or
- (C) intends to attend an educational institution during any of its regular sessions after an official academic break.

I. **"Notice"** means a written complaint or oral information that hazing, harassment or bullying may have occurred which has been provided to a designated employee from another employee, the student allegedly subjected to the hazing, harassment or bullying, another student, a parent or

guardian, or any other individual who has reasonable cause to believe the alleged conduct may have occurred. If the school learns of possible hazing, harassment or bullying through other means, for example, if information about hazing, harassment or bullying is received from a third party (such as from a witness to an incident or an anonymous letter or telephone call), different factors will affect the school's response. These factors include the source and nature of the information; the seriousness of the alleged incident; the specificity of the information; the objectivity and credibility of the source of the report; whether any individuals can be identified who were subjected to the alleged harassment; and whether those individuals want to pursue the matter. In addition, for purposes of violations of federal anti-discrimination laws, notice may occur when an employee of SHS, including any individual who a student could reasonably believe has this authority or responsibility, knows or in the exercise of reasonable care should have known about potential unlawful harassment or bullying.

- J. **"Organization"** means a fraternity, sorority, athletic team, association, corporation, order, society, corps, cooperative, club, or other similar group, whose members primarily are students at an educational institution, and which is affiliated with the educational institution.
- K. **"Pledging"** means any action or activity related to becoming a member of an organization.
- L. **"Retaliation"** is any adverse action by any person against a person who has filed a complaint of harassment, hazing or bullying or against a person who assists or participates in an investigation, proceeding or hearing related to the harassment complaint. Such adverse action may include conduct by a school employee directed at a student in the form of intimidation or reprisal such as diminishment of grades, suspension, expulsion, change in educational conditions, loss of privileges or benefits, or other unwarranted disciplinary action. Retaliation may also include conduct by a student directed at another student in the form of further harassment, intimidation, and reprisal.
- M. **"School administrator"** means a president, director of education, superintendent, principal or his/her designee assistant principal/technical center director or his/her designee and/or SHS's Equity Coordinator.
- N. **"Student Conduct Form"** is a form used by students, staff, or parents, to provide, in written form, information about inappropriate student behaviors that may constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying.

Designated Employees:

The following employees of Saxon Hill School have been designated by SHS to receive complaints of bullying and/or harassment pursuant to this policy and 16 V.S.A. § 570a(a)(7) and 16 V.S.A. §570c(7) and under federal anti discrimination laws;

Name: Betsy Synnott Title: Director of Education Contact Information: betsysynnott@saxonhillsschool.org	Name: Molly Abbey Title: Teacher Contact Information: mollyabbey@saxonhillsschool.org
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Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students

- I. Reporting Complaints of Hazing, Harassment and/or Bullying
 - A. Student Reporting: Any student who believes that s/he has been hazed, harassed and/or bullied under this policy, or who witnesses or has knowledge of conduct that s/he reasonably believes

might constitute hazing, harassment and or/bullying, should promptly report the conduct to a designated employee or any other school employee.

- B. School employee reporting: Any school employee who **witnesses conduct** that s/he reasonably believes might constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying shall take reasonable action to stop the conduct and to prevent its recurrence and immediately report it to a designated employee and immediately complete a Student Conduct Form.

Any school employee **who overhears or directly receives information** about conduct that might constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying shall immediately report the information to a designated employee and immediately complete a Student Conduct Form. If one of the designated employees is a person alleged to be engaged in the conduct complained of, the incident shall be immediately reported to the other designated employee or the school administrator.

- C. Other reporting: Any other person who witnesses conduct that s/he reasonably believes might constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying under this policy should promptly report the conduct to a designated employee.
- D. Documentation of the report: If the complaint is oral, the designated employee shall promptly reduce the complaint to writing in a Student Conduct Form, including the time, place, and nature of the alleged conduct, the identity of the complainant, alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses. Both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator will have the right to present witnesses and other evidence in support of their position.
- E. False complaint: Any person who knowingly makes a false accusation regarding hazing, harassment and/or bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion with regard to students, or up to and including discharge with regard to employees. There shall be no adverse action taken against a person for reporting a complaint of hazing, harassment and/or bullying when the person has a good faith belief that hazing, harassment and/or bullying occurred or is occurring.
- F. Rights to Alternative Complaint Process: In addition to, or as an alternative to filing a harassment complaint pursuant to this policy, a person may file a harassment complaint with the Vermont Human Rights Commission or the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education at the addresses noted below:

Vermont Human Rights Commission
14-16 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-6301
(800) 416-2010 or (802) 828-2480 (voice)
(877) 294-9200 (tty)
(802) 828-2481 (fax)
Email: human.rights@state.vt.us

Office for Civil Rights, Boston Office
U.S. Department of Education
8th Floor
5 Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109-3921
617-289-0111 (voice) 877-521-2172 (tdd)
617-289-0150 (fax)
Email: OCR.Boston@ed.gov

II. **Responding to Notice of Possible Policy Violation(s)**

- A. Upon **notice of information** that hazing, harassment and/or bullying may have occurred the designated employee shall:
- i. Promptly reduce any oral information to writing, including the time, place, and nature of the conduct, and the identity of the participants and complainant.
 - ii. Promptly inform the school administrator(s) of the information;

- iii. If in the judgment of the school administrator, the information alleges conduct which may constitute harassment, hazing or bullying, the school administrator shall, as soon as reasonably possible, provide a copy of the policy on hazing, harassment and bullying and these procedures to the complainant and accused individual, or if either is a minor, cause a copy to be provided or delivered to their respective parent or guardian.
- B. Upon **initiation of an investigation**, the designated employee shall:
 - i. Notify in writing both the complainant and accused individual (or if either is a minor inform their respective parent or guardian) that:
 - 1. an investigation has been initiated;
 - 2. retaliation is prohibited;
 - 3. all parties have certain confidentiality rights; and
 - 4. they will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation.
- C. All notifications shall be subject to state and/or federal laws protecting the confidentiality of personally identifiable student information. Pursuant to 34 CFR Part 99.30, a school administrator may seek the consent of the parent/guardian of the accused student, or the accused eligible student (if 18 or older, the accused student has the ability to consent), in order to inform the complainant of any disciplinary action taken in cases where the school determined that an act(s) of harassment, hazing, and/or bullying, or other misconduct occurred. The parent/guardian or eligible student shall provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records.

III. Investigating Hazing, Harassment and/or Bullying Complaints

- A. Initiation of Investigation - Timing. Unless special circumstances are present and documented, such as reports to the Department for Children and Families ("DCF") or the police, the school administrator shall, no later than one school day after Notice to a designated employee, initiate or cause to be initiated, an investigation of the allegations, which the school administrator reasonably believes may constitute harassment, hazing or bullying.
- B. Investigator Assignment. The school administrator shall assign a person to conduct the investigation; nothing herein shall be construed to preclude the school administrator from assigning him/herself or a designated employee as the investigator. No person who is the subject of a complaint shall conduct such an investigation.
- C. Interim Measures. It may be appropriate for the school to take interim measures during the investigation of a complaint. For instance, if a student alleges that he or she has been sexually assaulted by another student, the school may decide to place the students immediately in separate classes and/or transportation pending the results of the school's investigation. Similarly, if the alleged harasser is a teacher, allowing the student to transfer to a different class may be appropriate. In all cases, the school will make every effort to prevent disclosure of the names of all parties involved – the complainant, the witnesses, and the accused -- except to the extent necessary to carry out the investigation. In all cases where physical harm has resulted and/or where the targeted student is known to be expressing suicidal ideation, or experiencing serious emotional harm, a safety plan will be put in place. Safety plans must also be considered in cases where the targeted student is known to have difficulty accessing the educational programs at the school as a result of the inappropriate behavior. No contact orders, or their enforcement, may also be appropriate interim measures.
- D. Due Process. The United States Constitution guarantees due process to students and SHS employees who are accused of certain types of infractions, including but not limited to sexual harassment under Federal Title IX. The rights established under Title IX must be interpreted consistent with any federally guaranteed due process rights involved in a complaint proceeding, including but not limited to the ability of the complainant and the accused to present witnesses and other evidence during an investigation. SHS will ensure that steps to accord due process rights

do not restrict or unnecessarily delay the protections provided by Title IX to the complainant.

- E. Standard Used to Assess Conduct. In determining whether the conduct constitutes a violation of this policy, the investigator shall consider the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behavior, past incidents or past or continuing patterns of behavior, the relationships between the parties involved and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. The complainant and accused will be provided the opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence during an investigation. The school will also consider the impact of relevant off campus conduct on the school environment where direct harm to the welfare of the school can be demonstrated or the conduct can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's equal access to educational programs. Whether a particular action constitutes a violation of this policy requires determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances.
- F. Completion of Investigation – Timing. No later than five school days from the filing of the complaint with the designated employee, unless special circumstances are present and documented, the investigator shall submit a written initial determination to the school administrator.
- G. Investigation Report. The investigator shall prepare a written report to include a statement of the findings of the investigator as to whether the allegations have been substantiated, and as to whether the alleged conduct constitutes hazing, harassment and/or bullying. The report, when referencing student conduct, is a student record and therefore confidential. It will be made available to investigators in the context of a review conducted by either Vermont AOE, or investigations of harassment conducted by the Vermont Human Rights Commission or U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.
- H. Notice to Students/Parents/Guardians. Within five school days of the conclusion of the investigation, the designated employee shall:
 - i. Notify in writing both the complainant and accused individual (or if either is a minor inform their respective parent or guardian) that:
 - 1. the investigation has been completed;
 - 2. whether or not the investigation concluded that a policy violation occurred (and which policy term was violated, i.e. harassment, hazing and/or bullying);
 - 3. that federal privacy law prevents disclosure of any discipline imposed as a result of the investigation unless the parent/guardian of the accused student and/or the accused eligible student consents to such disclosure, pursuant to 34 CFR Part 99.30, as set forth in Section II, Part C, above.
 - ii. Notify the Complainant Student - or if a minor, their parent(s) or guardian - in writing of their rights to:
 - 1. an internal review by the school of its initial determination as a result of its investigation as to whether harassment occurred;
 - 2. request an Independent Review of the school's "final" determination as to whether harassment occurred within thirty (30) days of the final determination or although a "final" determination was made that harassment indeed occurred the school's response to that harassment was inadequate to correct the problem; and that the review will be conducted by an investigator to be selected by the president or Director of Education from a list developed by the Agency of Education;
 - 3. file complaints of harassment with either the Vermont Human Rights Commission and/or the federal Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.
 - iii. Notify the Accused Student – or if a minor, their parent(s) or guardian - in writing of their right to appeal as set forth in Section V of these procedures.
- I. Violations of Other Policies. In cases where the investigation has identified other conduct that may constitute a violation of other school disciplinary policies or codes of conduct, the designated employee shall report such conduct to the school administrator for action in

accordance with relevant school policies or codes of conduct.

IV. **Responding to Substantiated Claims**

- A. **Scope of Response.** After a final determination that an act(s) of hazing, harassment and/or bullying has been committed, the school shall take prompt and appropriate disciplinary and/or remedial action reasonably calculated to stop the hazing, harassment and/or bullying and prevent any recurrence of harassment, hazing and/or bullying, and remedy its effects on the victim(s). In so doing, the following should be considered:
- i. **Potential Remedial Actions.** Remedial action may include but not be limited to an age appropriate warning, reprimand, education, training and counseling, transfer, suspension, and/or expulsion of a student, and warning, reprimand, education, training and counseling, transfer, suspension and/or termination of an employee. A series of escalating consequences may be necessary if the initial steps are ineffective in stopping the hazing, harassment and/or bullying. To prevent recurrences counseling for the offender may be appropriate to ensure that he or she understands what constitutes hazing/harassment and/or bullying and the effects it can have. Depending on how widespread the hazing/harassment/bullying was and whether there have been any prior incidents, the school may need to provide training for the larger school community to ensure that students, parents and teachers can recognize hazing/harassment/bullying if it recurs and know how to respond.
 - (ii) **School Access/Environment Considerations.** SHS will also take efforts to support victims' access to SHS's programs, services and activities and consider and implement school-wide remedies, where appropriate. Accordingly, steps will be taken to eliminate any hostile and/or threatening environment that has been created. For example, if a female student has been subjected to harassment/bullying by a group of other students in a class, the school may need to deliver special training or other interventions for that class to repair the educational environment. If the school offers the student the option of withdrawing from a class in which a hostile environment/bullying occurred, SHS will assist the student in making program or schedule changes and ensure that none of the changes adversely affect the student's academic record. Other measures may include, if appropriate, directing a bully/harasser to apologize to the affected student. If a hostile environment has affected the entire school or campus, an effective response may need to include dissemination of information, the issuance of new policy statements or other steps that are designed to clearly communicate the message that the school does not tolerate harassment and/or bullying and will be responsive to any student who reports that conduct.
 - (iii) **Hazing Case Considerations.** Appropriate penalties or sanctions or both for organizations that or individuals who engage in hazing and revocation or suspension of an organization's permission to operate or exist within the institution's purview if that organization knowingly permits, authorizes, or condones hazing.
 - (iv) **Other Remedies.** Other remedies may include providing counseling to the victim(s) and/or the perpetrator(s), and additional safety planning measures for the victim(s).
- B. **Retaliation Prevention.** It is unlawful for any person to retaliate against a person who has filed a complaint of harassment or against a person who assists or participates in an investigation, proceeding or hearing related to the harassment complaint. A person may violate this anti-retaliation provision regardless of whether the underlying complaint of harassment is substantiated.

SHS will take reasonable steps to prevent any retaliation against the student who made the complaint (or was the subject of the harassment), against the person who filed a complaint on behalf of a student, or against those who provided information as witnesses. At a minimum, this includes making sure that the students and their parents, and those witnesses involved in the school's investigation, know how to report any subsequent problems and making follow-up inquiries to see if there are have been any new incidents or any retaliation.

- C. Alternative Dispute Resolution. At all stages of the investigation and determination process, school officials are encouraged to make available to complainants alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation, for resolving complaints. Certain considerations should be made before pursuing alternative dispute resolution methods, including, but not limited to: (1) the nature of the accusations (for example, face-to-face mediation is not appropriate for sexual violence cases), (2) the age of the complainant and the accused individual, (3) the agreement of the complainant, and (4) other relevant factors such as any disability of the target or accused individual, safety issues, the relationship and relative power differential between the target and accused individual, or any history of repeated misconduct/harassment by the accused individual.

V. Post Investigative Reviews

Rights of Complainants

- A. Internal Review of Initial Harassment Determinations By Complainant. A complainant or parent of a complainant may request internal review by SHS of a designee's initial determination (following investigation) that harassment has not occurred via written request submitted to the SHSI president or Director of Education. All levels of internal review of the investigator's initial determination, and the issuance of a final decision, shall, unless special circumstances are present and documented by SHS, be completed within 30 calendar days after review is requested.
- B. Independent Reviews of Final Harassment Determinations By Complainant. A complainant may request an independent review within thirty (30) days of a final determination if s/he: (1) is dissatisfied with the final determination as to whether harassment occurred, or (2) believes that although a final determination was made that harassment occurred, the school's response was inadequate to correct the problem.

The complainant shall make such a request in writing to the SHSI president or within thirty (30) days of a final determination. Upon such request, the president shall promptly initiate an independent review by a neutral person as described under 16 V.S.A. § 570a.(b)(1) and shall cooperate with the independent reviewer so that s/he may proceed expeditiously. The review shall consist of an interview of the complainant and relevant school officials and a review of the written materials from the school's investigation.

Upon completion of the independent review, the reviewer shall advise the complainant and school officials in writing: (1) as to the sufficiency of the school's investigation, its determination, and/or the steps taken by the school to correct any harassment found to have occurred, and (2) of recommendations of any steps the school might take to prevent further harassment from occurring. A copy of the independent review report shall be sent to the Secretary of Education.

The reviewer shall advise the student of other remedies that may be available if the student remains dissatisfied and, if appropriate, may recommend mediation or other alternative dispute resolution. The independent reviewer shall be considered an agent of the school for

the purpose of being able to review confidential student records. The costs of the independent review shall be borne by SHS. SHS may request an independent review at any stage of the process.

- C. Rights to Alternative Harassment Complaint Process. In addition to, or as an alternative to filing a harassment complaint pursuant to this policy, a person may file a harassment complaint with the Vermont Human Rights Commission or the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education at the addresses noted below:

Vermont Human Rights Commission
14-16 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-6301
(800) 416-2010 or (802) 828-2480 (voice)
(877) 294-9200 (tty)
(802) 828-2481 (fax)
Email: human.rights@state.vt.us

Office for Civil Rights, Boston Office
U.S. Department of Education 8th Floor
5 Post Office Square
Boston, MA 02109-3921
617-289-0111 (voice) 877-521-2172 (tdd)
617-289-0150 (fax)
Email: OCR.Boston@ed.gov

Rights of Accused Students

- A. Appeal. Any person determined to have engaged in an act(s) of hazing, harassment and/or bullying may appeal the determination and/or any related disciplinary action(s) taken, directly to the school board of the school district. The school board shall conduct a review on the record. The standard of review by the school board shall be whether the finding that an act(s) of hazing, harassment, and/or bullying has been committed constitutes an abuse of discretion by the school level fact finder. Appeals should be made to the school board within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the determination that an act(s) of hazing, harassment and/or bullying has occurred and/or any announced discipline. The school board shall set the matter for a review hearing at the next scheduled school board meeting to the extent practicable, but not later than 30 days from receipt of the appeal filing.
- B. Accused Student/Appellant Access to Investigative Reports/Findings. The school district shall make available upon request of the Accused Student/Appellant, any relevant information, documents, materials, etc. related to the investigation and related finding on appeal that can be redacted and de-identified in compliance with the requirements set forth at 34 CFR Part 99. For those documents that cannot be provided due to the requirements set forth at 34 CFR Part 99, when an Accused Student/Appellant seeks a review on the record before the school board of the school district, a school administrator may seek the consent of the parent/guardian of the targeted student, or the accused eligible targeted student (if 18 or older, the targeted student has the ability to consent), in order to inform the accused student of the findings which gave rise to the school's determination that an act(s) of harassment, hazing, and/or bullying occurred. The parent/guardian or eligible student shall provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records.

VI. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

- A. Privacy Concerns. The privacy of the complainant, the accused individual, and the witnesses shall be maintained consistent with SHS's obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to comply with laws governing the disclosure of student records or other applicable discovery or disclosure obligations.
- i. Concerns Related to Harassment Complaints. The scope of appropriate response to a harassment complaint may depend upon whether a student or parent of a minor

student reporting the harassment asks that the student's name not be disclosed to the harasser or that nothing be done about the alleged harassment. In all cases, school officials will discuss confidentiality standards and concerns with the complainant initially. The school will inform the student that a confidentiality request may limit the school's ability to respond. The school will remind the student that both federal Title IX and Vermont Title 9 prevent retaliation and that if he or she is afraid of reprisals from the alleged harasser, the school will take steps to prevent retaliation and will take strong action if retaliation occurs. If the student continues to ask that his or her name not be revealed, the school should take all reasonable steps to investigate and respond to the complaint consistent with the student's request as long as doing so does not prevent the school from responding effectively to the harassment and preventing harassment of other students.

The school will evaluate the confidentiality request in the context of its responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students. The factors the school might consider in this regard include the seriousness of the alleged harassment, the age of the student harassed, whether there have been other complaints or reports of harassment against the alleged harasser, and the rights of the accused individual to receive information about the accuser and the allegations if a formal proceeding with sanctions may result. If information about the incident is contained in an "education record" of the student alleging the harassment, as defined by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, the school will consider whether FERPA prohibits it from disclosing information without the student's consent.

- B. Document Maintenance. The presidentSuperintendent or school administrator shall assure that a record of any complaint, its investigation and disposition, as well as any disciplinary or remedial action taken following the completion of the investigation, is maintained by SHS in a confidential file accessible only to authorized persons. All investigation records created in conformance with this model policy and model procedures, including but not limited to, the complaint form, interview notes, additional evidence, and the investigative report, shall be kept by the Equity Coordinator, Designated Employees and SHS/Supervisory Union Central Office for at least six years after the investigation is completed.

VII. Reporting to Other Agencies

- A. Reports to Department of Children and Families. When a complaint made pursuant to this policy includes allegations of child abuse, any person responsible for reporting suspected child abuse under 33 V.S.A. § 4911, et seq., must report the allegation to the Commissioner of DCF. If the victim is over the age of 18 and a report of abuse is warranted, the report shall be made to Adult Protective Services in accordance with 33 V.S.A. § 6901 et seq.
- B. Reports to Vermont Agency of Education. If a harassment complaint is made in a public school about conduct by a licensed educator that might be grounds under Vermont law for licensing action, the principal shall report the alleged conduct to the Superintendent and the Superintendent shall report the alleged conduct to the Commissioner. If a harassment complaint is made in SHSIn an independent school about conduct by a licensed educator that might be grounds under Vermont law for licensing action, the head of school is encouraged to report the alleged conduct to the Secretary of Education.
- C. Reporting Incidents to Police

- a. FERPA Rights. Information obtained and documented by school administration regarding the school's response to notice of student conduct that may constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying may constitute an "educational record" regarding the student or student(s) involved as defined by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. Accordingly, such information may not be disclosed without prior parent approval to local law enforcement except in response to a lawfully issued subpoena, or in connection with an emergency if disclosure is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.
 - b. First Hand Reports. Nothing in this policy shall preclude persons from reporting incidents and/or conduct witnessed first-hand that may be considered to be a criminal act to law enforcement officials.
 - c. Hazing Incidents. It is unlawful to (1) engage in hazing; (2) solicit direct, aid, or attempt to aid, or abet another person engaged in hazing; or (3) knowingly fail to take reasonable measures within the scope of the person's authority to prevent hazing. It is not a defense in an action under this section that the person against whom the hazing was directed consented to or acquiesced in the hazing activity. Hazing incidents will be reported to the police in a manner consistent with the confidentiality rights set forth above in this section.
- D. Continuing Obligation to Investigate. Reports made to either DCF or law enforcement shall not be considered to absolve the school administrators of their obligations under this policy to pursue and complete an investigation upon receipt of notice of conduct which may constitute hazing, harassment and/or bullying.

VIII. Disseminating Information, Training, and Data Reporting

- A. Disseminating Information. Annually, prior to the commencement of curricular and co-curricular activities, SHS shall provide notice of this policy and procedures to students, custodial parents or guardians of students, and staff members, including references to the consequences of misbehavior contained in the plan required by 16 V.S.A. 1161a. Notice to students shall be in age-appropriate language and include examples of hazing, harassment and bullying. At a minimum, this notice shall appear in any publication of SHS that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct for SHS.
- B. Student Training. The school administrator shall use his/her discretion in developing age-appropriate methods of discussing the meaning and substance of this policy with students to help prevent hazing, harassment and bullying.
- C. Staff Training. The board or its designee shall ensure that teachers and other staff receive training in preventing, recognizing and responding to hazing, harassment and bullying.
- D. Data Gathering. Public school districts shall provide the Vermont Agency of Education with data requested by the Secretary of Education.

Legal References:

Title V, Section B, 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794 et seq.; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d;

Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq.; Family Education Rights Privacy Act; 20 U.S.C. §1232g;

Public Accommodations Act, 9 V.S.A. §§4500 et seq.;

Education, Classifications and Definitions, 16 V.S.A. §11(26);(30)(A);(32); Education, 16 V.S.A. §140(a)(1); Education, 16 V.S.A. §166(e); Education, Bullying, 16 V.S.A. §570c; Education, Harassment, Hazing and Bullying, 16 V.S.A. § 570; Education, Harassment, 16 V.S.A. §570a; Education, Harassment, 16 V.S.A. §570c; Education, Harassment, 16 V.S.A. §570f; Education, Hazing, 16 V.S.A. §570b; Education, Hazing, 16 V.S.A. §570f

Education, Discipline, 16 V.S.A. §1161a; Education, Suspension or Expulsion of Pupils; 16 V.S.A. §1162;

Child Abuse, 33 V.S.A. §§4911 et seq.; Adult Protective Services, 33 V.S.A. §6901 et seq., all as they may be amended from time to time. Washington v. Pierce, 179 VT 318 (2005).

Child Abuse/Neglect

Definitions

State statute requires that professionals in the fields of teaching, day care, mental health, social services, medicine, and law enforcement report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. By Statute, sexual abuse may be committed by anyone. All other types of abuse and neglect must be committed by "the person responsible for the child's welfare." There are four types of child abuse and neglect defined in the statute:

1. Abuse • Physical injury • Mental injury • Sexual abuse	2. Neglect • Inadequate food • Inadequate clothing • Inadequate shelter • Inadequate health care	3. Threatened Harm • Substantial risk of serious physical or mental injury	4. Abandonment
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Policy

In accordance with state law and regulation, as well as early care and education best practices, it is the policy of Saxon Hill School to report all instances of suspected child abuse and/or neglect within 24 hours, when there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse and/or neglect may have occurred. To protect children participating in Saxon Hill programs, criminal background checks are required of all Saxon Hill paid and volunteer staff.

Once a paid or volunteer staff person suspects that abuse and/or neglect may have occurred, they are to convey this belief to the director and president of the board. Once the director and president of the board have been notified, the staff person must contact the Family Services Division (SFD) at the number posted by the school's phone and make a report of the suspected abuse and/or neglect. (The SFD caseworkers at this number may also be contacted anonymously to determine whether a situation actually constitutes reason to suspect abuse and/or neglect.)

All phone reports must be followed by a written report using Saxon Hill's Abuse and/or Neglect Reporting Form. Copies of the form should be kept by the staff member who made the report, the Director of Education, and the Board President.

It is also the policy of Saxon Hill:

1. That staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect at Saxon Hill are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious.
2. To ensure that all staff are informed of this policy and of their duty to report abuse and/or neglect, as well as the fact that failure to report can result in a fine of up to \$500.00.
3. To conduct background checks on all staff and volunteers at the time of initial employment or volunteer service.
 - a. Require fingerprint-supported record check for teachers, substitute teachers, documentarians, enrichment/summer program staff, and/or students working toward a degree in teaching (i.e. student teachers) who may have unsupervised contact with Saxon Hill students.
4. To ensure that all information gathered through record checks remains confidential in accordance with the VCIC confidentiality requirements:
 - a. Saxon Hill agrees to use criminal record information for the purpose intended by law. Saxon Hill will not disclose the contents of criminal record information without the applicant's permission to any person other than the applicant and Saxon Hill staff who have a need to know the contents of the record.
5. That families with a history of child abuse or criminal activity may be present to drop off and pick up their children and may participate in program activities provided they are under

continual supervision by staff. They may not be left alone with children nor counted in the staff/child ratio.

6. To provide staff and interested volunteers with training as to the prevention and identification of abuse and/or neglect.
7. To annually review, with staff, methods and practices which Saxon Hill can implement to reduce the potential for abuse and/or neglect within the program.
8. To cooperate with DCF in any investigation involving Saxon Hill, its staff, and/or its volunteers.
9. To take immediate action to safeguard children, up to and including suspension from duty, should an allegation of abuse and/or neglect be made against a staff person or volunteer. The specific action will be determined by the board based on the details of the case.
10. To take immediate action to safeguard children, up to and including dismissal from duty, should a staff person or volunteer be found to have perpetrated abuse and/or neglect.

6.3.4 Criminal Background Check

It is the policy of Saxon Hill to comply with the provisions of state law requiring criminal record checks of prospective school employees and contractors, and to select for employment only persons who are of good character and who have the skill and other qualifications necessary to fulfill job requirements.

In accordance with Act 163 of 1998, Saxon Hill will conduct background checks on any person having unsupervised contact with the children. The law defines “unsupervised” as “...not in the presence of a responsible adult in the employ of or under the direction of the ... independent school.” Student teachers, independent contractors, substitute teachers and volunteers at Saxon Hill are in the presence of an employed adult and therefore are not subject to criminal checks. However, if the board and staff feel the subjected person would be in unsupervised situations, a criminal background check will be completed.

Saxon Hill will consider information provided through background checks when weighing veracity, character and general suitability of candidates for employment. Unless otherwise exempt from such checks by statutes, all prospective employees and those employees of contractors who will have unsupervised contact with children shall be screened as required by Act 163 of 1998 (16 V.S.A. 251-260).

The board of Saxon Hill shall require all applicants, as a condition of consideration for employment, cooperate fully with background investigations. All offers of employment will be conditioned upon completion of the background investigation and a finding that the information provided by the applicant was accurate, complete and truthful.

Providing a safe learning environment for students is a primary consideration in Saxon Hill's employment decisions. The school will base such decisions on all relevant information, qualifications and circumstances. Unfavorable background check information is not an automatic bar to employment, and a background check with no unfavorable information is not a guarantee of employment.

Criminal records and criminal record information obtained through background investigations will be treated as confidential. They will be disclosed only to those people specifically designated by state or federal or regulation as entitled to receive such information.

The following protocol will apply to the maintenance of criminal record check information.

- The Director of Education or Administrator of Saxon Hill will maintain criminal history files.
- Criminal history logs, processed release forms and criminal record information will be maintained for three calendar years in accordance with Saxon Hill's agreement with the Vermont Criminal Information Center. These are stored on Saxon Hill's BFIS (Bright Futures Information System) account.

