

St. Joseph School

**Early Childhood
Parent
Handbook**

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Please Note: Information regarding tuition payments, terminations, holidays and closings, diversity/non-discrimination policy, and other general school policies are detailed in the all school handbook.

WELCOME

to

St. Joseph School

Early Childhood Program

Starting school is an important time in a child's life. We hope this booklet gives you information that will help your child make a happy adjustment to school life. Most children are excited about starting school. Our goal is to provide your child with experiences that will foster this delight for learning.

The first few weeks of school may be a little tiring as your child adjusts to new routines, new friends, and a different environment. Please feel free to talk with your child's teacher about any concerns or worries you may have regarding this new experience. The staff will be pleased to assist you in any way.

We wish you and your child a wonderful year and look forward to a positive home-school relationship.

Preparation for the First Days of School

The first days of the St. Joseph School Preschool Program mean new experiences for the parent, the child, and the teacher. They can be happy days. The child's first experience in preschool, among strange new people and unfamiliar surroundings may be a little frightening. He or she may be reluctant to get into group activities. The child is not hurried, but allowed time to become familiar and comfortable with the room. With your support, your child will gradually develop a relationship with peers and teachers.

Please say goodbye to your child and the teacher before you leave. Your child needs to know that you are leaving so he/she will not be fearful that you will disappear.

Although the teachers may appear to be able to talk to you, they are actually busy watching the children. Please plan to talk with teachers by special appointment.

Philosophy and Goals

During the early childhood years, children are learning to trust others outside their families, gain independence and self-control, and take initiative and assert themselves in socially acceptable ways. Children are also learning to think and they learn by doing. Children make sense of the world around them through active involvement with their environment. They observe what happens when they interact with materials and other people. As they engage in a variety of activities they add pieces of information to what they already know and come to new understandings about the world.

Our Early Childhood program is developmentally appropriate. This means that the activities the children engage in are appropriate for their age and their developmental level. It also means that teachers work with each child to ensure that their individual educational and developmental needs are being met.

The goal of the Early Childhood program is to provide a rich environment that encourages children to observe, to be active, to make choices, and to experiment. Through interactions with the environment children will develop in the following areas: Physically children will enhance both their large and small muscle control and use all their senses in learning. Children will develop socially and emotionally as they experience a sense of self-esteem, develop a positive attitude toward life, and demonstrate cooperative, pro-social behavior. Finally children will develop cognitively as they acquire learning and problem solving skills, expand logical thinking skills, expand verbal communication skills, develop beginning reading and writing skills, acquire concepts and information leading to a fuller understanding of the world, and demonstrate skills in make-believe play.

Children's Daily Activities

The daily activities of your child will include a balance of quiet and active play; large group activities, small groups activities, and opportunities to play alone or with others; indoor and outdoor play; and time for children to select their own activities as well as time for teacher-directed activities. The classroom environment will provide a variety of activities that children can choose from such as dramatic play, block play, creative expression, manipulatives and cognitive games, literacy activities, and sand and water play. Children will have a chance to sleep or rest during the day. Children will also have opportunities to engage in self-help skills such as toileting, dressing, and washing hands along with tasks in the classroom such as table setting and cleaning up.

Hours of Operation/After Care

The preschool program begins accepting children at 7:30 a.m. each day and all children, whether bused or brought by parents, are expected to be in the classroom by 7:50 a.m. so they can fully participate in all activities of the program. Children are dismissed each afternoon at 2:20 p.m.

A before school and aftercare program is available from 6am-6:00pm for free. Please see School Handbook or discuss this with office staff if your child will need to stay at school after the regular program ends.

Arrival and Departure

Children who arrive by bus or car will enter the school through the parking lot door and go immediately to the gym. The parking lot is marked directionally to indicate where vehicles may drive and where children may be safely dropped off. The same procedures are followed at the end of the day as buses are loaded and children are picked up by parents in the gym.

Children who arrive late must enter through the main entrance of the building and go to the office and obtain a pass to go to the classroom.

Please notify the school in advance if you plan to pick up your child early. We will only release your child to people you have authorized in writing to pick your child up. This information is in your child's permanent school file.

Health Procedures

Accidents and Illnesses

In the event that a child becomes ill or injured, the parent or person designated by the parent will be asked to come to the school for the child. If a child has an accident or an incident at school, we will notify you by telephone and provide a written report of what happened. If a child becomes ill at school, space will be provided that is within sight and hearing of an adult and equipped with a cot and materials that can be easily cleaned and sanitized. A student who has vomited at school or has a temperature of 100 degrees or more must be sent home. Children should remain at home at least 24 hours after a fever has subsided.

Communicable Disease Control

Rules and regulations regarding communicable disease control shall be enforced as required by Illinois Department of Public Health. Children with infectious, contagious, or communicable illnesses which require isolation will be excluded from the program. Parents should notify the school if their child has a communicable disease. The child's teacher and the principal will be notified.

Physical/Immunization Requirements

A complete physical exam by a licensed physician is required for all children entering preschool. It should be reported on forms prescribed by the Illinois Department of Public Health and dated no earlier than six months prior to enrollment. The physical report must include all required immunizations that are up-to-date. A T.B. test must be included in the exam.

Emergency Information Card

Each year parents are asked to complete an emergency information card listing home and business telephone numbers, the name of the family doctor, and the names of people who will care for their children in an emergency. If changes in the information occur, the school must be notified immediately.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

There is an emergency evacuation plan for your child's classroom. The plan is posted in an easily visible place by the door and the teachers and students practice evacuating the classroom and building on a regular basis to be prepared for an emergency.

Hand-washing Policy

In order to decrease the spread of infection, children and staff wash hands at appropriate times while they are at school. These times include, before each meal and snack, after using the toilet, after handling pets or animals, after wiping or blowing one's nose, and before and after food experiences. When washing hands, children and staff use warm water and soap, rub their hands together under running water making sure to get in between their fingers, dry hands with disposable towels and turn off faucets with the disposable towel.

Sanitizing Procedures

In order to maintain a clean and safe classroom, it is necessary to sanitize and wash tables, toys, and bedding on a regular basis. Teachers use a bleach solution in order to sanitize tables that are used for meals and snacks. These tables are sanitized both before and after any meal or snack. Other tables are cleaned on a daily basis. Toys that children put in their mouths are immediately put aside to be sanitized. Other toys are cleaned on a regular basis. All bedding used at naptime needs to be washed weekly. If these items are sent from home please make sure you wash them whenever they are sent home and return them with your child when they return to school.

Medication Policy

Teaching staff are not allowed to administer medications to a child. The exception to this policy is an Epi-pen for severe allergies. The Epi-pen will be kept by the office staff in a secure location.

Is My Child Sick Enough to Stay Home?

A difficult decision must be made by parents of children attending school when a child complains of not feeling well on a school day. The parent must decide whether the child stays home or goes to school. What is a parent to do? How can you be sure that you make the right choice? You don't want to keep the child home if he really is not sick, but you also don't want to send a sick child to school. This information is not intended to be medical advice, but can be used as a guideline to be followed until your doctor can be contacted for his or her opinion.

Fever

A fever indicates that there is a problem in the body. The best way to check for a fever is with a thermometer which every home should have. No child with a temperature over 99 degrees should be sent to school. If a thermometer is not available, check the child's forehead with the back of the hand. If it is hot, keep the child home and have the child's temperature taken with a thermometer. A child must not return to school until she has been fever free for 24 hours.

Cold, Sore Throat, or Cough

The common cold is a frequent malady in children. A very congested child with a hacking cough belongs at home in bed, even without a fever. A child with a sore throat, but no other symptoms, may go to school. If, however, white spots are on the throat or a temperature is present, a doctor should be contacted.

Rash

A rash may be the first symptom of a childhood illness, such as measles or chicken pox. A rash, or “spots” may cover all of the body or may only be in one area. Do not send your child to school with a rash, unless your doctor has determined that it is not contagious.

Stomach Ache, Vomiting, or Diarrhea

In general, complaining of only a stomach ache, without other symptoms is not reason in itself to keep a child home from school. If vomiting occurs, the child should stay home until food will stay down. A child having diarrhea should be kept at home. If any of these symptoms do not improve, worsen, or consistently reoccur, your doctor should be notified.

Pain

Headache – A headache as the only symptom is not a reason to keep the child at home. If the headache consistently reoccurs, a reason should be sought, such as the need for glasses.

Toothache – notify your dentist

Earache – seek physician’s advice

Special Needs Policy

Children with special needs that cannot be accommodated by the program are referred to the local public school or other appropriate agency for testing and/or services. For all other cases, a plan is developed with staff and parents as needed.

Child Protection /Mandated Reporter

Please be aware that all staff members are required by law to report suspected incidents of child abuse. It is not the intent of the school to become involved in individual family matters; however, in some incidents when the physical and emotional safety of any child is suspect, we are bound by law to report the matter to DCFS. Details regarding any individual child’s protection is a matter held in strictest confidence by all adults involved.

Healthy Snacks and Meals

Hot lunch is available at the school for a fee. All families are provided with a copy of the monthly menu and may sign their children up to receive lunch. Parents also have the options of sending a lunch from home with the child.

It is important to provide healthy snacks and meals for your child. Some examples of foods to include for meals and snacks are fresh fruit, raw vegetables, crackers, peanut butter, cheese, yogurt, breads, unsweetened cereals, raisins, etc. Drinks should be unsweetened 100% fruit juice or milk.

Healthy meals are important. Please avoid sending foods such as cookies, cakes, candy, and chips. Allow your child to help make healthy choices as you prepare her lunch.

Children in the Preschool for All Program will receive a healthy snack and drink free of charge daily.

Dress Code

Children should wear comfortable clothes that are easy to take on and off by themselves. Children will be engaging in all kinds of play experiences including messy ones and need to be free to move and get a little dirty. Children will be going outdoors daily so they should come to school with appropriate outdoor clothing such as coats, mittens, boots, and hats in cold weather.

A complete change of clothing, kept at school, for use in an emergency is required for each child. Please include underwear, shirt, pants, and socks. All the items of clothing should have your child's name on them so they will not be lost. If your child needs to use these clothes at school please wash them and return them or replace them with other clothes.

Special Events and Field Trips

Field trips and attendance at special events enrich children's experiences and broaden their interests and knowledge. Common field trips are to the Racine Zoo or a visit to a pumpkin farm or orchard. Special events might include attending a play. Parents are invited to go along on these trips which involve transportation by bus.

When children participate in activities off the school grounds, a permission slip is sent home for parents to sign and return indicating that the child can participate and what the cost, if any, will be. Parents who wish to chaperone will receive information regarding what is expected of them. Permission slips for other events, such as walking trips in the neighborhood will be sent home as needed.

Throughout the school year, an effort is made to involve families in special events such as pot lucks, parent education meetings, and family nights with fun activities for all ages. Parents will be given advance notice of these activities and events. All families are encouraged to attend as this is a way to show your children that school is both welcoming and important. Your presence fosters a positive attitude toward going to school that is necessary for the child's success.

Discipline

Discipline means guiding and directing children toward acceptable behavior. The most important goal of discipline is to help children gain self-control over their actions. Teachers discipline children to help them learn the consequences of their actions. Children need to assume responsibility for their actions and develop an awareness of the rights of others.

Simple understandable rules will be used with children. Children will be made aware of the relationship between their actions and the consequences that follow. Teachers who have an ongoing relationship with the child will be responsible for discipline and will use the following approaches: 1) redirection to another activity, 2) loss of privilege or activity, 3) where age appropriate, helping children resolve their conflicts, 4) anticipate and intervene before disruptive behavior occurs, 5) praising positive behavior.

Children will never be subjected to corporal punishment or to verbal abuse. Meals or parts of meals will not be withheld as punishment, and children will never be punished for toilet accidents.

Communicating with Families

We believe that the children's families greatly impact their educational experiences; therefore we want to do everything we can to keep you informed of your child's activities and accomplishments. Teachers look forward to talking with you but are not able to do so when they are managing the children in the classroom. If you would like to talk to your child's teacher about a matter please come either before or after school or schedule a time that would be good for you and for the teacher.

Other ways that we communicate with our families include news- letters, written notes, and telephone calls.

Family Involvement

Family members are encouraged to be involved in the Early Childhood program. Involvement may include helping out in the classroom, sending things from home, or doing things at home to contribute to the classroom. Your child's teacher will be happy to give you ideas to help you be involved in your child's school experience. If you would like to work in the classroom, please make arrangements with the teacher. We welcome any family participation and know that it will help your child value her education and encourage her to do her best.

Assessment of Children's Progress

Children in the preschool program are assessed through a variety of techniques including observations, anecdotal notes, discussions with parents, a portfolio with monthly samples of art and writing along with pictures of the child engaged in activities in the classroom, and checklists of developmental milestones. The goals and objectives of the program are those of the *Creative Curriculum* program. These are posted in the classroom for parents to review.

A formal assessment will be done two times each school year using an online program called *Teaching Strategies Gold*. This program allows the teacher to include videos, pictures, and narratives in the assessment review. Parent-teacher conferences are held two times a year to share information about the child's progress and to gather information from parents about the child's interests and needs. If a parent has concerns or wants to share information at other times, it would be helpful to call the school and make an appointment with the teacher.

All children in the preschool program will be screened in the fall using the *Early Childhood Inventory – Revised (ESI-R)*. The purpose of this screening is to determine if there are any developmental delays and to identify areas where the teacher may want to make adjustments to the program to meet the needs of individual children. It should be noted that nearly all children score well on this screening. For the child who does not, early intervention will prevent problems and will lead to greater chances for success in subsequent school years. Results of the screening are shared with parents at the first parent-teacher conference.

This screening is performed only with parental consent; parents will be asked to fill out a number of forms which will give additional information that will help teachers better know each child.

Transitions

Your child will experience some transitions throughout the year. If your child is in the before or after school program we will work to make the daily transition from that program to the preschool classroom as smooth as possible. If your child is beginning kindergarten next year we will do everything we can to prepare your child for that. Your child's teacher will also read books to the class and discuss the changes the children may experience in their new school or classroom.

Handling Difficulties and Differences

When a parent has a concern about something that is going on in the school or the classroom, the first person that should be contacted is the classroom teacher. Often these situations can be readily explained or remedied when the teacher and parent work together. If there is a continuing concern on the part of the parent and/or teacher, the principal will be invited to participate in the problem-solving process, in a continuing effort to bring home and school together on behalf of the student.

Confidentiality

All information about your family and your child is confidential. The information we collect will only be shared with the principal, teaching staff, and you, as parents. The information we collect is used to design classroom curriculum that helps your child develop to the fullest potential.

Note: This handbook is continuously reviewed. It may be updated and revised by school staff as needed. Please read all the information in the Early Childhood Handbook AND in the Parent Handbook distributed to all families who have children enrolled at St. Joseph School.