

1ST. MARY PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK



2024-2025

STAFF

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FORWARD

Welcome to the St. Mary Early Childhood Program! We are thrilled that you have chosen to have your family become a part of our learning and parish family! Your children are special and we feel privileged that you have entrusted us with them.

This handbook is designed to help make your experience in our program a positive one. Our philosophy, policies and procedures are documented for you. Please keep a copy handy for future reference.

We believe that you are your child's first and most significant teachers. We encourage each of you to become an active participant in your child's time here with us. We will strive to maintain open communication with you daily, weekly, and monthly through a variety of means. Please know that you are always welcome here!

I look forward to serving you as the Director and a teacher at St. Mary Preschool. If you have any questions or concerns, my door is always open to you.

Blessings,

Rachel McAnespie

PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophy is to facilitate children's development in their faith, communication, social-emotional, play skills, cognition, motor skills, self-help skills and build a positive self-concept. This "whole child" approach will take place in active, safe and nurturing environments. We believe that children construct their own understanding of the world through active involvement with materials, people and concepts. The staff's role is to facilitate their understanding of their world by creating opportunities for them that are developmentally and age-appropriate through the use of materials, planned spaces, play opportunities, and a consistent daily routine based on developmentally appropriate practices.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Mary Preschool and School is to educate children to become caring and compassionate Catholic Christians in their daily living as collaborative workers, critical thinkers, and life-long learners. This begins with our very young learners in preschool.

BELIEF STATEMENT

We believe that:

1. All students can learn, and as a Catholic institution, all knowledge must be illuminated by the light of our faith.
2. Students should be provided with supportive and challenging academic activities, as well as, a safe and secure environment to actively engage them in the educational process for optimal learning.
3. Your child's success depends on a spirit of cooperation and efforts by school personnel and parents working in a strong partnership.

CURRICULUM and ASSESSMENT

The Ohio Learning and Development Standards (Social-Emotional Development, Approaches Toward Learning, Physical Well-Being and Motor Development, Cognitive Development and General Knowledge, and Language and Literacy

Development) will be covered through multiple measures. We will be using DiG: Develop, Inspire, Grow. Children learn by playing AND doing, so by combining developmentally appropriate instruction with opportunities to engage in explorative play in learning centers, DiG offers a balanced path to kindergarten readiness. DiG is based upon a firm foundation of research in child development and learning focuses on interest areas or "learning centers." These centers support children's development. The learning centers include:

Blocks

Dramatic Play (Housekeeping)

Toys and Games (Manipulatives)

Art

Library

Discovery (Science)

Sand and Water

Music and Movement

Computers

Outdoor/Gross Motor Play

In each of these areas or centers, children's play and knowledge develop and expands across a continuum. A thematic approach will be used, with themes that are generated with children's interests in mind and integrated into instruction. The theme will be carried throughout the various centers. In addition, a program called Handwriting Without Tears will be used to develop pencil grip and letter formation using a multi-sensory approach. We will be using the Catholic Diocese's Religion course of study for preschool to address religion in the classroom. These programs all are hands-on and interactive and integrate naturally with each other.

Further, all programs align with the state standards as well as the Diocesan religious standards.

Each child's development will be screened within the first 60 days of enrollment using the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE. These are easy to answer questions that the parent will answer based upon their observations of their child. The teacher will then score the questionnaire and then make contact with the parents to discuss the results. The answers that the parents supply will show the child's strengths and any areas in which the child may need additional support or more practice with a certain skill. If the child's scores are well above the cutoff, then the team will continue to monitor the child's progress and if need be, make a recommendation for further evaluation.

A speech and hearing screening will be made available to families within the first 30 days of the start of school.

Each family will be supplied with a list of community resources in there Back-to-School packet. These resources can be utilized by any family at any time. In addition to the DiG's imbedded assessment that will be completed, our program will also be using the Early Learning Assessment.

The Early Learning Assessment is a part of Ohio's Ready for Kindergarten Assessment System, a joint project of Ohio's Department of Education and Department of Job and Family Services.

The assessment is designed to aid teachers in determining where children are in their readiness for kindergarten. The Early Learning Assessment will provide information for teachers about children from early preschool to kindergarten.



Ohio

**Department of Education
Department of Job and Family Services**

All programs who serve preschool-age children will have the opportunity to use the Early Learning Assessment to improve and support the growth and development of children.

[Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (birth to kindergarten entry) are the basis for the Early Learning Assessment. The assessment focuses on seven areas of a child's growth and development:

Social Foundations (including social and emotional development, and approaches toward learning)

Mathematics

Science

Social Studies

Language and Literacy

Physical Well-being and Motor Development

Fine Arts

This assessment process is on-going throughout the year and is used to inform our instruction of all students. Children are assessed using a variety of methods such as observation, work samples, checklists and anecdotal notes. In addition, each child will have a portfolio of work and/or documentation that will be kept and updated throughout the year by year teacher. These assessment results will be reported to parents during parent teacher conferences. Further, the results will also inform teachers and assist in guiding future lessons that may be necessary in her particular class.

If at any time throughout the year, there is a concern about a child's development in any domain, the teacher will discuss these concerns with the parents. If parents are in agreement of a specific concern, then the team will meet with the Director to discuss them. The team may agree to intervention and or recommend further evaluation.

STAFF

St. Mary Preschool's lead teachers are licensed with degrees in Early Childhood and/or Child Development. These lead teachers have extensive experience working with young children. Assistant teachers have experience and training through workshops, courses and professional conferences, as well as actual hands-on time working with young children. All staff members are observed and formally evaluated by the director of the program at least 2 times/year. The staff is committed to professional development and attends in-service training on a yearly basis. All are certified in Communicable Disease, Child Abuse and Prevention, and First Aid/CPR.

CLASS SIZE

The St. Mary Preschool program will adhere to the teacher to student ratio set forth by the Ohio Department of Education at all times.

(Clovers 1:12 and Shamrocks 1:12)

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION

Each child enrolled must be at least 3 years of age by the start of school and be fully potty trained. There is a \$75.00 non-refundable registration fee for each child enrolled in the program. The 2023-2024 tuition rates are:

Clovers: Tues.-Thurs. Half Day Class: \$1700.00/year

Clovers: Tues.-Thurs. Full Day Class: \$3900/year

Shamrocks: Mon.-Friday Half Day Class: \$2400.00/year

Shamrocks: Mon-Friday Full Day Class: \$5600/year

Extended Day Option for those enrolled in an afternoon half session (3:00-4:30pm):

3 Days per week: additional \$1000/year

5 Days per week: additional \$1200/year

*Families that have two or more children in the Preschool will pay the full rate for their oldest child and receive a 2% discount off the tuition rate for each additional child registered in the preschool program.

*Tuition can be paid upfront for a 3% discount or it can be paid in 10 equal monthly installments from August-May.

***All payments are due no later than the 15th of each month. There will be a \$10 late fee for any tuition payments that are made after the 15th of the month. If tuition is more than 3 weeks past due, your child's spot in the program may be terminated.** It is up to the parents to discuss with the Director any circumstances in which tuition will be late prior to the due date.

*There are 4 morning classes. Three classes are 5 days and one is 3 days. These sessions run from 8:00am-11:00am. There is one session offered in the afternoon. This will be a 5-day class. However, if the class is not filled by the start of school, then students attending 3 days in the afternoon will be accepted. These sessions run from 12:00pm-3:00pm. The make-up of each class can change each year depending on the children that are enrolled in the program. The placement of each child in which class they are enrolled will be determined by the preschool staff and based upon classroom needs and dynamics, among other factors. Any questions

regarding the placement of your child should be directed to the Director of the Preschool program.

Early Childhood Education Grant

In April 2016, St. Mary Preschool was awarded as a provider of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Grant. This provides children whose family income is not above 200% of the Poverty Level to qualify for free or reduced preschool. Eligibility will be verified by obtaining copies of pay-stubs and the most recent tax forms with each application. Monthly tuition will be based upon the verified income according to the Sliding Fee Scale. This grant is only for children who will be 4 years old by Oct. 1st and are not age eligible for kindergarten. Any interested parents should contact the program director for registration and/or more information. All ECE Grant Recipients must be in attendance for 75% of our scheduled preschool days the first semester. Failure to be at school more than 75% of the scheduled days in the first semester may result in the loss of the grant funding. The Director will give quarterly updates on attendance to all Grant recipients and notify you if your status with the grant would become in jeopardy.

SCRIP Fundraising/Tuition Credit Program

The purpose of the SCRIP program is to provide an incentive for families to raise additional funds for the school, therefore, help keep tuition costs down. The fiscal year for SCRIP runs from April 1st to March 31st each year. This means that any SCRIP orders placed this school calendar (2024-25) year will apply towards the following school year's tuition (2025-26). For more information regarding this program and how to purchase, please refer to the SCRIP Fundraising/Tuition Credit Program information sheet in your child's "Welcome" packet.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

At the time of registration, the following items must be presented to the director:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Child's Medical Statement-within 30 days of start of school
3. **Immunization records-prior to start of school**
4. Tuition Agreement(s)
5. Enrollment Form
6. Emergency Transportation Form
7. Custody Papers if applicable
8. Photo Release/Permission
9. Signed copy of this Parent Handbook

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

AM Clover and Shamrock drop off will begin at 7:45 and end at 8:15. You are **REQUIRED** to bring your child to the **back** door of the primary building and physically hand your child off to the teacher. Teacher(s) will open the back door and let children in at 7:45am and close the door at 8:15. PM preschool will begin at 12:00, there is no extended drop off. **Please do not ring the bell prior to 7:45 and noon.** The preschool teachers spend the first 15-20 minutes of our day planning and preparing for our day with your children. Please be respectful of this time. Class will dismiss promptly at 11:00 am and 3:00pm. Kindly wait for your child **outside** the back door for your child's class to come out. Please be sure that you make the teacher aware that you are taking your child. Children will only be released to those adults that parents designate in advance. If for some reason you need to pick your child up prior to the end of class, you will need to proceed to the office in the main building and we will be notified at that time. Children enrolled in

in a full day program will be dismissed at 4:30 using the same routine as listed above.

LATE FEE

A five dollar (\$5.00) late fee will be charged to a parent or guardian who picks up a child after the dismissal time; with an additional \$5.00 for each 10-minute period thereafter.

CALAMITY DAYS/SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In the event of a 2-hour delay, there will be no school for the morning Clovers or Shamrocks. Children enrolled in a full day option will begin at 10:00am. In the event of an early dismissal, there will be no school for the afternoon Clovers or Shamrocks. There would be no Full Day Option for children in the morning session and parents would need to pick up their child at the end of their morning preschool session-11:00am.

CLOTHES AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children should come to school dressed for ACTIVE play. Comfortable tennis shoes and loose clothes for running and climbing are best. Sandals, flip flops, and high heeled shoes are not appropriate or safe for preschool. Please understand that your child may (probably will) get dirty at school. So please only send your child to school in play clothes. A complete change of clothes that coincide with the season will be collected at the start of school and will be used as necessary. We also ask that your children leave toys/trinkets/blankets, etc. at home. We cannot be responsible for lost items and will have plenty of toys and activities to occupy their time at school.

SNACKS

A snack is served daily and should consist of a nutritious item and drink (juice or milk). Parents are to provide this on a rotating basis. Each family will supply a snack and drink for the entire class for the entire week they are at school. A monthly snack schedule will be supplied so that each family is made aware and has ample time to prepare for their rotation in the snack schedule. You will receive a copy of a healthy snack list from your teacher to give you some ideas on what is appropriate to send in. State licensing rules require that two (2) food groups be served daily. If you are unable to financially provide for the snack, please let your child's teacher know and we will make alternative arrangements.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

At St. Mary Preschool, we firmly believe that the parents are the most important teachers in their children's lives. Given this belief, we encourage parental and family input and participation in all aspects of our preschool program. Parents will be supplied, upon enrollment, with a parent handbook that will keep them informed about the program's operations, services and policies. Parents will also be given opportunities to visit the classroom at various times throughout the year. In addition, a form will be sent home after school begins to invite parents to volunteer in our school and classrooms. In addition, at the end of the year, all parents will be given an electronic and/or paper copies of a yearly assessment of the preschool program. We value this input and use it to improve our program annually. Teachers will keep an open line of communication to all parents, via daily

Take Home Folders, emails, and text messages. This communication is vital to a child's overall growth and development. Parents of any child enrolled in the program shall be permitted unlimited access to the school during its hours of operation to contact his/her child, evaluate the care provided by the program, the premises or for other purposes approved by the director. Kindly let your teacher know of your desire to do so. All school staff and volunteers who have care, custody, and control of students must have on file a current Bureau of Criminal Investigation criminal background check and must attend the "Protecting God's Children" workshop as required by the Diocese of Columbus. All visitors must report to and register with the office upon arrival at the school regardless of the nature of the visit. For the safety of all staff and students, **NO ONE MAY ENTER THE SCHOOL AND PROCEED DIRECTLY TO THE CLASSROOMS WITHOUT VISITING THE OFFICE FIRST!**

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent teacher conferences will be conducted twice a year to discuss your child's progress. In conjunction with the use of the DiG curriculum and the Early Learning Assessment, teachers will complete and review with you your child's global growth. These assessments listed above monitor the child's development across all developmental domains. If you have any questions regarding your child's progress, you are encouraged to talk with your child's teacher at any point in the school year. An atmosphere of mutual respect is to be maintained by all parents and teachers at all times. When a parent has a concern about their child's programming, the parent should first talk with the teacher about the concern. If the issue is not resolved, then proceed to discuss the concern with the program director. At this point, the teacher and program director will work out a plan that is acceptable to all parties

involved. Parents who wish to file a complaint may do so with the Ohio Department of Education and can find links to complete this process at their website under "Dispute Resolution".

ATTENDANCE

Daily attendance is encouraged and expected. Students benefit most from our program when they can be part of the classroom on a consistent and daily basis. Of course, there are good reasons for excused absences from school which include: personal illness, illness in the family, observation or celebration of a religious holiday. If your child will not be attending school, it is important to call the building secretary or email the director. Please indicate the reason your child is absent, especially if he or she has a contagious illness.

Please do not send your child to school with a fever, bad cough or severe cold (within the past 24 hours). All children must be fever free, absent of diarrhea and vomiting for AT LEAST 24 HOURS, without medication before they can return to school.

POLICY REGARDING MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

All children must have a copy of their vaccination record on file with the Director prior to the start of school. In the event of an exemption for any reason, a note from the child's doctor is required. In addition, our school policy is that a non-vaccine child needs to leave the building when an outbreak occurs to protect themselves during the incubation period and outbreak period.

The following shall be recognized as signs of illness:

- 1) Temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit taken by auxiliary method.

- 2) Skin rash.
- 3) Diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- 4) Evidence of lice infestation or other parasitic infestation.
- 5) Severe coughing causing the child to become red or blue in the face, or a cough that makes a whooping sound.
- 6) Difficult or rapid breathing.
- 7) Yellowish skin or eyes.
- 8) Conjunctivitis (pink eye).
- 9) Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool.
- 10) Stiff neck.

Any child who shows any of the above signs of illness shall be separated immediately from the group, made comfortable and provided a cot to rest on and observed for worsening condition. The parent or designated adult will then be phoned so that the child may be picked up immediately. One member of the preschool staff shall remain with the child who is ill until a parent can pick up the child. All cots and/or linens used by the ill child shall be disinfected with an appropriate germicidal agent. Information on contagious diseases will be given to parents, of the other children in the program to warn them that their children may have been exposed to a communicable disease. The child who has been discharged due to illness, shall upon re-admittance to preschool, be observed by a person trained in communicable disease and first aid prior to reentering the class. Please help us minimize the spread of illness by using good judgment. If your child is lethargic or just not acting like themselves, please keep them home and monitor their health from there. The teachers will notify parents if their child who may not be exhibiting any of the above symptoms but is not feeling well enough to

participate in the activities at school. We share EVERYTHING in preschool and that includes germs. Your help in controlling the spread of illness is greatly appreciated!

MEDICATION POLICY

If medication needs to be administered during preschool, we must have written authorization from a doctor or dentist and have the prescribed container listing the name and instructions. Parents must also fill out a consent form that we have in the school office. Request forms must include the child's name, name of the medication, dosage amount, time of administration, duration of the need and possible side effects.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/DISCIPLINE POLICY

St. Mary Preschool will provide a safe and nurturing environment by use of such techniques as positive reinforcement, praise and redirection. Our goal for discipline focuses on the development and maintenance of self-control. In our effort to create a safe and structured environment for your child the following guidelines are implemented:

*A preschool staff member in charge of a child or group of children shall be responsible for their discipline.

*Constructive, developmentally appropriate child guidance and management techniques are to be used at all times and shall include such measures as redirection, separation from problem situations, talking with the child about the situation and praise for appropriate behavior.

*No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, and derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family or other verbal abuse.

*There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to pinching, punching, shaking or biting.

*No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.

*No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child, such as a protective hug, for a short period of time, so the child may regain control.

*Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat, sleep or for toileting accidents.

*The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.

*Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame, or frighten a child. Rather, teachers will:

- Encourage children to do their own problem solving.
- use positive suggestions
- emphasize desirable aspects of behavior
- give each child opportunities to make choices when appropriate
- explain reasons behind expectations

*Discipline shall not include withholding of food, rest or toilet use.

*Separation shall only be used when a child is unable to control his/her behavior and when it infringes on the rights of others.

*No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined area such as a closet, box or a similar cubicle.

WHEN A CHILD'S CONSISTENT INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR INTERFERES WITH TEACHER'S AND OTHER CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OR BECOMES A SAFETY CONCERN, THE FOLLOWING STEPS MAY BE TAKEN:

1. Observation of the child by preschool director.

2. Parent/teacher conference to discuss concerns.
3. Implementation of a behavior plan designed by the director and teacher with parent input.
4. Referral to school district or other psychological professional for evaluation.
5. If these steps fail to bring about a positive change, the child's participation in the program may be terminated.
6. The parent of a child in a center will receive the program's written discipline policy. All staff members receive a copy of the preschool's discipline policy for review upon employment.

STUDENT ROSTER

A student roster which includes each child's name, phone number and email will be prepared annually by the preschool teachers and provided to parents upon request. Parents will be asked to sign a statement indicating whether they desire to have their child's information included on the roster.

SAFETY POLICY

*When an accident or injury occurs which requires medical attention or the emergency transportation of a child, an Incident Report shall be completed, and a copy shall be given to the parents of the child.

*No child will be left alone or unsupervised at any time.

*Fire and tornado drill plans are posted in each classroom. Plans for rapid dismissals and lock-down drills are available in individual buildings.

*First-aid supplies are available in all preschool classrooms.

*Medical and dental emergency plans are posted in each preschool classroom.

*Each child must have completed annually a medical evaluation (including updated immunization record) and emergency medical form. All required forms are kept in student files in the classroom.

*Each classroom has hand-washing procedures posted in the classroom.

TRANSITION POLICY

Within preschool classrooms: Teachers will meet prior to the upcoming year to prepare the next year's teacher for each child that moves from 1 teacher to another. Parents are encouraged to be a part of this discussion.

Between Preschool and School Age: There will be a "K for a Day" event that will take place in early spring for those that are or may be transiting from preschool to kindergarten. This is a time for children and their parents to experience what it is like to be a kindergartener at St. Mary's. Over the summer, there will be a Kindergarten Screening Day. During this event, children will be put through a series of stations that will examine their cognitive, fine motor, gross motor as well as vision and hearing screenings. The preschool director will be involved in the Kindergarten Screening process. The preschool teachers will meet with the kindergarten teacher to discuss the students that will be transitioning from our preschool to the kindergarten class.

PRESCHOOL LICENSURE

The most recent written compliance report for St. Mary Preschool is posted on the Parent Information Board next to the program's current license. Copies of the inspection report are available from the Office of Early Childhood Education at 614-466-0224 upon request.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

All information pertaining to a student is considered privileged and cannot be released without written permission of the parent or legal guardian. Personally identifiable information will not be published by the school, either electronically or in print, unless a parent has signed a release.

I have received a copy of the Parent Handbook and have reviewed the policies related to my child's enrollment in St. Mary Preschool Program.

Child's Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to your child's teacher by the end of the first week of school!

Thank You!