

# **ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL, LAKE LEELANAU**

## **PRESCHOOL and PRE-K HANDBOOK**

*Updated December 2022*

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

St. Mary Catholic School educates preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in an environment based on Gospel values. St. Mary School guides students to recognize their God-given potential and develop their talents to become leaders who are committed to their faith, lifelong learning, and service to others.

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

St. Mary Preschool is a faith based, developmentally appropriate program for 3 to 6-year-old children committed to help them grow socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually.

### **ENROLLMENT POLICY**

St. Mary Preschool admits children of any race, nationality, or ethnic origin. Church membership is not required, all families are welcome.

Three-year-old students must be three by September 1st of the enrolling year and must be confidently toilet trained. Pull-ups or diapers are not an option unless the child has an IEP or special education plan.

Four-year-old students enrolling in our Pre-K program must be four by September 1st of the enrolling year. Children may attend our Pre-K program until they begin Kindergarten or 6 years of age.

We require three and four-year old children (who are not entering kindergarten the following year) to be enrolled a minimum of 2 days, which can be either half or full days. Children enrolled in our Pre-K program must attend Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday full days; Monday and Friday are optional.

If attendance is low on any particular day of the week, based on parent schedules, we may “close” the classroom for the school year. For example, Fridays are typically not requested by parents. If that were the case, the director would not hold class on Fridays and would work on administrative and curriculum tasks instead.

The following forms must be submitted before a child may be considered for enrollment to the program:

**Preschool and Pre-K Children:**

- Application form and associated fee
- Information regarding previous IEP (Individualized Education Plan), or special accommodations, therapies or treatments; including but not limited to physical therapy, occupations therapy, counseling, and so on.

Once the child has been admitted, the following forms must be filled out before a child can attend school:

- Parental agreements and forms:
  - Child Information Record
  - Instructions regarding: Diet, Health Care Plan (including Allergies) or Special Needs Instructions
  - Written Information Packet Documentation
  - Health Appraisal (of a physical examination that occurred within the preceding 12 months for new students or updated every two years for preschoolers) AND proof that all immunizations are up to date or a copy of a waiver addressed to DHHS and signed by the parent stating immunizations are not being administered due to religious, medical or other reasons.
  - Routine Transportation Permission
  - Permission to Apply Topical, Non-Prescription Ointments
  - Food Provided From Home Statement
  - Pesticide Use Notification
  - Media Permission (granted or denied)

Other information as required:

- Volunteer Screening, for parents wishing to chaperone field trips or volunteer in classroom on a regular basis.
- Medication Permission (We will not administer pain reliever, fever reducer, or cold and flu medication)
- Field Trip Permission Form prior to actual trip

## **SCHEDULE OF OPERATION**

St. Mary Preschool/Eagle's Nest maintains the same school calendar and inclement weather closing dates as the main St. Mary School. No care is provided during school breaks/vacation or inclement weather dates. Please note: If attendance is low on a particular day of the week, per the child enrollment form, such as on Friday, which is not requested by parents very often; we would "close" the classroom on that day of the week. The preschool director would use that day for administrative and curricular duties.

### **Arrival and Departure Times:**

#### ***Full Day Schedule:***

***Arrival:*** Drop off outside the classroom by a parent can occur between 7:45 am and 8:15 am. A preschool staff member will sign your child in. If your child is 4 years of age or older, and rides the school bus, a school staff member will escort them from the bus that stops at our building, to our classroom and a preschool staff member will sign them in.

***Departure:*** You may pick your child up at the classroom door between 2:50 pm and 3:15 pm. If child is 4 years-old or older and rides the school bus, a school staff member will escort them to the school bus. Your child will be signed out on our daily attendance sheet by a preschool staff member. New to the 2020-2021 school year, we will not transport children to the main school for pick-up with siblings, in accordance with our school-wide health plan.

#### ***Morning Only Program:***

***Arrival:*** Drop off in the classroom by a parent can occur between 7:45 am and 8:15 am. If your child is 4 years of age or older, and rides the school bus, a school staff member will escort them to our classroom and sign them in.

***Departure:*** You may pick your child up outside the classroom door by NOON. Your child will be signed out on our daily attendance sheet by a preschool staff member.

#### **Other:**

***"Late start dates"***- see school calendar for dates- we will open at 10:15 am.

***"Early dismissal or half day dates"*** we will close at 11:30 am. Lunch will not be served on early dismissal or half days. We will offer am snack, however.

***"Inclement weather dates," including snow days, delayed start times:*** The preschool classroom will be closed if the main school is closed, and if a delayed start time is announced, the preschool will open at the time announced.

### *Absences and early departure days*

Full payment is expected for absences and days your child is sent home early for either illness or behavioral issues. Our program is licensed by the State of Michigan/LARA and therefore we must follow the adult to child ratio requirements. Staffing needs are based on the number of children we have scheduled. For safety reasons, we strive to have two teachers present at all times. It also allows us to differentiate our curriculum by breaking into smaller groups for school readiness activities.

***Adding days to your child's schedule:*** If the addition is either one time or on a longer basis, please see the preschool director in advance. We are required by the State of Michigan/LARA to have 1 teacher (caregiver) and one other qualified adult present when 8 or more children are in attendance. Adding children may affect our ratios and requires careful planning. Please note, you will be required to pay for any additional days you add to your child's schedule.

***Decreasing the amount of days your child is scheduled for:*** Please see the director in advance and keep in mind our attendance policy which requires a minimum of two days per week.

### **TUITION**

A payment drop envelope will be available at drop off or pick for your convenience. Please do not leave payment in your child's backpack. Payments are due at the beginning or in advance of each week. You may also pay monthly. Setting up an ACH payment schedule or questions regarding your child's tuition can be answered at the Parish office.

***You will not receive a credit for days your child is absent.*** We base our staffing needs, the amount of food required, etc. based on the number of children enrolled each day. It our desire to be good stewards of our resources at St. Mary and your assistance is appreciated.

If you add a day to your child's schedule either one time or long term, please see the Parish office regarding new tuition balance.

**All schedule change requests must be made at least one week in advance**, by contacting the preschool director.

Tuition fees include am and pm snack and hot lunch for children attending a full day. An am snack and hot lunch are included in tuition for children attending a half-day program. Half-day dismissals: pick up is between 10:50 am and 11:15 am. Only an am snack is served on half-days.

Attendance	Drop Off	Pick Up	Tuition
Full Day	7:45 am – 8:15 am	2:50 - 3:15 pm	\$41.00/day
Mornings Only	7:45 am – 8:15 am	12:00 NOON	\$30.00/day

## ATTENDANCE:

Preschool attendance is important for your child as it provides a sense of consistency. **Please call the preschool office by 8:30 am if your child will be absent due to illness or for any other reason. You may reach us at 231-256-9636, ext. 454. You may also text a message using our Remind app.** If your child has an appointment scheduled, please call the preschool office and let us know when to expect your child. Our program opens at 7:45 am. There are many learning activities that occur before our Opening Circle Time at 9:30 am and **we prefer everyone arrive by 8:15 am.** Timeliness helps to facilitate classroom routine. Young children have a hard time inserting themselves into activities when they arrive late. For example, a child is used to doing the same schedule of activities upon arrival to school every day and cannot easily understand that now it is lunch time and that the usual activities have already occurred.

**We do not allow free “make-up” days if your child is absent.** Please contact the Parish office for more details.

Early pick-ups are allowed. Please let us know in advance so we can communicate where we will be on Campus that time of day.

## TERMINATION OF PRESCHOOL CONTRACT OR EARLY WITHDRAWAL

School initiated withdrawal which will occur in writing:

- As stated under DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE, our program reserves the right to terminate services to children who present a danger to self, other children or adults or after all other avenues have been explored by teacher and parent. Teachers and administrators will make every effort to modify inappropriate behavior, using the techniques mentioned in the Discipline and Guidance section of our Parent Handbook. Behavior difficulties will be discussed with parents before termination is put into effect unless the child has caused serious injury to another child or staff member. In that case, parents will be called and termination will be immediate.
- Delinquent payments-see Parish office for information
- Chronic absences
- Chronic pick up after scheduled school closure times.

Parent initiated withdrawal will also occur in writing:

- If a parent feels the school program is not a good fit for their child.

- If a family changes location of residence. The school does not have residency requirements however.
- The family experiences financial difficulty. Please inquire about possible scholarships available at the Parish office before withdrawing your child due to financial reasons.
- Child develops an illness that prevents him or her from attending a group program.

If a child is prematurely withdrawn from the preschool program due to a change of address or illness, please contact the Parish office regarding finalizing financial matters.

Parents always have the right to request that records, such as cumulative files, be transferred to the child's new school. Please contact the preschool director if you wish to have your child's records transferred.

**We do not allow “make-up” days if your child is absent.** Please contact the Parish office for more details.

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

### **SMOKING AND VAPING**

Smoking and vaping must not occur in or on the child care center/preschool or on real property that is under the control of the center and upon which the center is located. It must also not occur on field trips and in vehicles when children are present.

### **FOOD SERVICE**

Included in your full day tuition are two snacks and one lunch for each day your child is in attendance. Children attending a half day will be served one snack and lunch. Milk is included at lunch unless your child has a signed and dated statement from you or your physician, indicating an allergy. Please indicate foods your child may not have. Otherwise, we have to offer your child milk. All food is provided by the school kitchen manager and the school lunch program and delivered to our classroom. They are nutritious and served in sizes appropriate for preschool aged children.

We will try to accommodate special diets, however we may require you to provide the special substitute.

If you would rather provide a lunch for your child, please send in a sealed lunch bag that contains an ice pack. We do not have a refrigerator large enough to accommodate lunch bags. The State of Michigan, division of Child Care licensing requires that **all lunch bags be labeled with your child's first and last name and the date**. Also required by licensing is a one-time note stating that you may provide a cold lunch for your child throughout the school year, for consumption of field trips or classroom celebrations. This form is included in your enrollment packet.

Please do not send your child with breakfast or snack foods to be eaten at school.

The lunch and snack menu is posted in our classroom. The lunch menu is also posted on school website under the tab "Parents." If substitutions are made, they will be indicated on the menu, the day they were made. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the schools of all current allergies as well as any that develop.

We pray prior to eating lunch each day.

Children are encouraged to eat the majority of their food at lunch and snack and are given ample time to do so. Occasionally, a child may be asked to throw the remainder of their snack food away if, after ample time has been allowed to eat and the child has not finished. Food will never be withheld for any reason.

Snack time is during "Center Time," where children can choose when to visit the snack table. We announce the opening of the snack table and keep it open for approximately 30 minutes. We announce "last call" prior to closing the snack. Once a child washes their hands and are seated at the snack table, they have about 15 minutes to complete their snack. Children are encouraged to eat most of their food at lunch and snack. Occasionally, a child may be asked to throw the remainder of their snack or lunch food away if, after ample time has been allowed to eat and the child has not finished. Typically, remaining cold lunch items are sent home.

Birthday and holiday treats from home are encouraged and appreciated, however we ask that you do not send in cake or cupcakes. Please check with the teacher regarding allergies prior to preparing or purchasing items for a treat or class party.

You may be asked to provide your child with a cold lunch when we have a special visitor or attend a field trip.

## **STAFF TRAINING IN NUTRITION AND SAFETY**

Staff are trained in health, safety and nutrition, CPR and First Aid as well as Mandated Reporter requirements, according to LARA, Child Care Licensing Bureau. They have been trained in how to handle basic emergencies, injuries and incidents. Emergency plans are posted near each exit, in the Teacher Binder that staff take with them during shelter in place drills (or in the case of a real emergency) and every time they leave the classroom.

## **REST TIME**

A quiet period of approximately 45 minutes to one hour is provided daily for children in attendance 5 or more continuous hours a day. Staff will ask you at the time of enrollment about your child's napping and sleeping habits. Children may keep a small blanket at school in case they desire a nap (we encourage children to pay attention to their body's signals regarding hunger, sleep and need to use the bathroom) or the parent requests that the child naps. The nap time items will be stored in a separate bag within their cubby. Nap mats are labeled with child's name and placed in a large garbage bag to prevent contact with other mats. Mats are cleaned at the end of the week if they have been used.

## **HAND WASHING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

All staff and students routinely use soap and water to wash hands utilizing the rules posted in each hand washing area and in our health care center. During small group/skill time sessions at the beginning of the year, we teach children how to wash their hands correctly, including how to turn off the faucet with a paper towel. We revisit handwashing in our small group time throughout the year as well.

## **HEALTH CARE CENTER-CHILDREN**

We have a designated area in our classroom for children to practice taking care of their own hygiene. It contains a poster with illustrations indicating when to wash hands, facial tissue, baby wipes (for hands and face) and a small trash can.

## **HEALTH CARE CENTER-STAFF**

We have a health care center that is out of reach of children. It contains two digital thermometers, masks, hand sanitizer, vinyl gloves and tissue. In the preschool office and in our "teacher backpack" we have a first aid kit. We store prescription (labeled with child's name and pharmacy information) and non-prescription medication with the corresponding permission form either in the locked cabinet in the preschool office or in the refrigerator, based on directions.

## **HANDLING BODILY FLUIDS**

Universal precautions are used when handling bodily fluids. Vinyl gloves are available in the classroom along with biohazard waste bags. Staff are trained yearly in the area of Blood Borne Pathogens, in accordance with the Diocese of Gaylord.

## **CLEANING AND SANITIZING**

All tables and chairs are cleaned prior and after child use, employing a 3 Step Process per licensing regulations.



Daily cleaning includes bathrooms (twice a day), floors swept and mopped, and carpet vacuumed. Water bottles (parent provides) are washed at the end of the day, using a sanitizing solution as the final rinse.

Toys and learning materials are cleaned on a regular basis. Toys that a child has placed in their mouth or coughed or sneezed on, are removed from play and washed using a 3 Step process at the end of the day.

## HEALTH SCREENING

Parents are asked to screen their child at home prior to sending them on a bus or bringing them to school. Staff will conduct their own health screenings upon arrival each day.

### *Illness and Criteria for Keeping your Child Home*

If your child has had close contact with a person who has COVID-19, the family should according to directions from the BLDHD or any other health department or agency involved with the contact tracing of the exposure/potential exposure. As health regulations are subject to change, please consult with the preschool teacher regarding the most recent requirements.

If your child has any of the following symptoms or ailments in the past 24 hours, he or she must remain at home for the health and safety of the rest of the children and teachers, **until symptom free for 24 hours and without the use of fever-reducing or other medication:**

- o Body temperature of 100.4 or higher (temperature taken orally or via a body/surface scan thermometer)
- o Chills
- o Consistent cough, not due to allergies
- o Chest congestion
- o Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- o Fatigue or extreme fussiness or highly irritable
- o Muscle or body aches
- o Headache
- o New loss of the sense of taste or smell
- o Runny nose that the child cannot manage on their own with proper hygiene

- o Sore throat or hoarse voice
- o Diarrhea
- o Vomiting
- o Nausea
- o Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) or undiagnosed symptoms of conjunctivitis
- o Undiagnosed rash
- o Chicken Pox, Mumps, or Measles
- o An open sore near the mouth or other area of the body
- o Lice – In the event that a child contracts lice, he/she must be NIT free before returning to school. Please expect an administrator to do a final check upon return.

Please note: cough and/or diarrhea in addition to a fever is suggestive of coronavirus.

For communicable diseases, a child must be on **prescription medication for 48 hours before returning to preschool.**

Parents are asked to notify the school (231-256-9636, ext 454) if a child will not be attending preschool for any reason. If a child is not attending preschool due to illness, parents are asked to be specific in reporting the illness, for record keeping purposes. (If an illness becomes common throughout the school, parents will be alerted without identifying the ill child, children or adult. Therefore, specific symptoms or diagnoses are appreciated.)

Items and facilities used by an ill child or adult will not be used by any other person until washed, rinsed, and sanitized.

Upon arrival to school, the staff member greeting families will visually check for signs of illness also: flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), nasal discharge, fatigue or extreme fussiness.

#### **IF A CHILD BECOMES ILL AT SCHOOL:**

- If we suspect your child is ill or they communicate such to us, we will take their temperature and care for them apart from their classmates. On a day when there are two teachers present, the child will receive a nap mat and be placed in an area away from other children. The teacher will wear a cloth or disposable face covering while caring for the ill child. If there is only one teacher present, the child will receive a nap mat and be placed in an area that is in the teacher's direct line of vision.

- Parents/guardians will be called for pick up. Please pick your child up within the hour of being called. If you need to have someone else pick up your child, please make those arrangements and communicate those to the preschool staff.
- The pick-up person will need to bring in a photo ID until we become familiar with them.
- If a child is scheduled to ride a bus home, a parent must pick-up, as we cannot send an ill child on the bus.
- Please see the health policy regarding how long a child must remain at home and when they can return to school.

#### Reporting Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 or Other Contagious Illnesses: Families, Staff Members and Volunteers:

- If you or someone in your household has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19, please call the preschool director at 231-256-9636, ext. 454 or on her cell phone. Messages will be returned ASAP.
- If your child has symptoms of a contagious disease such as (but not limited to) fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, excessive runny nose that a child cannot manage on their own, body aches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, a rash that has not been diagnosed and the child has not been cleared to return to group care, open sores around their mouth, discharge from one or both eyes, redness of the eye, ear ache, etc., please seek the advice of your primary care physician or the nearest after hours facility.
- Please see the health policy regarding how long a child, staff member or volunteer must remain at home and when they can return to school.
- Families-please call the director before 8:30 am of the day your child scheduled to attend school.
- Staff members and volunteers, please call the director prior to your scheduled shift so plans can be made for a substitute.
- The director must report positive cases of COVID-19 (not symptoms) to the local health department (BLDHD). You may be contacted the health department and given instructions regarding quarantine and asked questions regarding contact tracing issues.
- Families, staff member and volunteers will be notified of possible exposure to a communicable disease, as required by licensing. **CONFIDENTIALITY WILL BE MAINTAINED.** Please do not ask a staff member or volunteer who is ill. Even if a child or family member discusses a positive test result, the preschool staff will not confirm or deny or participate in discussions.
  - Notification of possible exposure to a communicable disease will occur via email and a posting at the main classroom door.

## **VENTILATION**

We will open windows in the classroom year-round to create a cross breeze in the hopes to provide proper air flow, which has been known to create a healthier environment for all present.

## **USE OF MASKS**

We will consider current guidance from the local health departments and state mandates regarding the use of masks. Please see the preschool director for the current policy.

## **VACCINATIONS**

Staff members of St. Mary School will not inquire about your COVID-19 vaccination status. Currently, it is not mandatory for staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccination or booster, so the decision is left up to the individuals.

## **STAFF ILLNESS**

Staff members are expected to stay home if they have been diagnosed with a communicable disease or are experiencing the following symptoms:

- Diarrhea or vomiting in the past 12 hours
- Body temperature above 100.4 degrees F.
- Consistent cough that is not related to allergies or the common cold
- Sore throat or hoarse voice for more than 3 days
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) or undiagnosed symptoms of conjunctivitis
- Undiagnosed rash
- An open sore near the mouth or other area of the body that has not received the attention of your primary health care provider.

## **IF A STAFF MEMBER BECOMES ILL THROUGHOUT THE DAY**

- The staff member will wear a cloth face covering, contact the director if the staff member is the only person on duty, he or she will contact the principal and arrange for a substitute. The staff member will do their best to limit interactions (while maintain proper supervision) with children until they can be relieved by another staff member.
- In the event that a substitute is not available, you may be asked to pick up your child early.

## **HEALTH RESOURCES**

- Several local health resources are available in the area including: Center for Disease Control, The American Red Cross, Benzie-Leelanau County Health Department and Munson Medical Center

## **BAD WEATHER, EMERGENCY CLOSINGS AND EVACUATION PLAN**

Snow and bad weather closings will be announced on area radio and television stations beginning at 6:30 a.m. School closings will also be posted on our school's website, [www.stmarysll.org](http://www.stmarysll.org), and texted through the Remind app. If the K-12 school is closed, the preschool will be closed as well. We follow the same schedule for holidays and vacations also.

When weather emergencies arise while school is in session, and time does not permit for a safe dismissal, students will be sheltered at school. In the event of a public emergency, please do not call the school, but listen to the radio or television stations mentioned above for school information.

If we must evacuate the building, the Preschool Director will contact the School Principal for directions which may be coordinated with the area crisis management team. You may receive a call from a cell phone you do not recognize. PLEASE update the school and preschool of any changes in emergency phone numbers, approved pick up persons, change in employment, etc. as they occur.

Emergency and evacuation plans are posted at each exit in the preschool classroom. Our primary evacuation sites: The sandbox area under the large tree or St. Mary Church or Mrs. Bunek's Beauty Salon. Some situations may require that we transport children on a school bus to Leland or Suttons Bay Public Schools. If all phone service is out, including cell phone service, you may find your child with their teachers at one of the mentioned locations above. Teachers will remain with all children until they have been received by a parent or approved pick up person.

## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A complete crisis management plan exists and is on file with the Leelanau County Sheriff's Department. It is reviewed annually at our back to school staff meeting. Teachers possess an easy-to-use version for their classrooms.

## **FIRE/TORNADO/SHELTER IN PLACE DRILLS**

There will be at least one fire drill quarterly, and 2 tornado drills between the months of March through November. Two shelter-in-place drills will be conducted each year. This is in compliance with state and diocesan guidelines. Emergency routes are posted in each classroom, near the exits.

## ACADEMIC EDUCATION AND PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children learn best through play and experiencing the world through their five senses and whole-body learning: physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual. Our goal is to provide your child with learning experiences that will prepare them for kindergarten. The preschool environment is set-up in such a way that active exploration is encouraged and supported. Learning Stations and activities reflect the STREAM educational approach incorporating Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics into our play-based environment. We subscribe to the [Teaching Trailblazers/Pre-K Pages curriculum](#) which is a research based curriculum that aligns with national learning standards for preschool children.

Our class is a mixed-age classroom; however, we have 2 skill time sessions each day where children are divided into smaller groups, each with 1 teacher, to focus on one of the 35 school-readiness skills mentioned above. All children complete a brief activity at a table upon arrival prior to choosing a learning center to work at.

Our daily schedule (attached and posted in the classroom) provides plenty of uninterrupted child-choice activities as well as brief teacher-directed activities. Children need time to plan an activity and carry it out to increase higher level thinking skills.

Handwriting Without Tears (recently changed to Learning Without Tears) for Pre-K is our handwriting curriculum. Children learn to write in order of strokes, rather than in alphabetical order. The elementary classrooms at St. Mary Catholic School utilize the same curriculum. You may find out more at <http://www.hwtears.com/hwt>.

## ASSESSMENTS

We at St. Mary Preschool believe that learning is a process and that children develop at their own pace; therefore, we use an *Authentic Assessment* model that allows the teachers to capture learning as it happens.

1. Observe skills as they naturally occur
  - a. We believe young children construct knowledge through interactive, concrete and hands-on experiences. Teachers record observations through play-based activities and throughout the natural course of the day.
2. Record observations
  - a. Every activity in our curriculum is based on one or more of the 35 school-readiness skills that span 7 learning domains. Teachers will either save a work sample such as a photograph, voice recording, video or photograph. Our curriculum provides us with a scope and sequence for teaching and assessing

skills for the school year. Anecdotal notes may be added as well in the SeeSaw app.

- b. Teachers will also utilize the recording sheets at the back of the Handwriting Without Tears workbooks (Pre-K students only).
3. Reflect on learning
  - a. Collecting work samples and displaying them for children, families and other stakeholders to view, allow for all parties to reflect on what has been learned. Teachers can also consider how to adapt future lessons based on the children's interests and/or needs.
4. Share the work samples with families and Kindergarten Teacher
  - a. Learning becomes visible as it is stored in a child's portfolio, on a bulletin board or other display and as it is entered in the SeeSaw app.
  - b. Completed Handwriting Without Tears workbooks and the recording sheets are sent home to families.
  - c. Children in the Pre-K group will also share their portfolio with the Kindergarten teacher.

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

A worship table for Jesus Time is provided in which specific biblical and liturgical themes suitable to the children's developmental needs are presented. The children are encouraged to explore and learn through hands-on materials that reinforce the information presented. Jesus Time is celebrated every day except days that we attend Adoration at St. Mary Catholic Church. During Jesus Time, your child will hear Bible stories, sing Sunday School songs and on occasion have a related craft or coloring sheet.

Children will walk with teachers to St. Mary Catholic Church and attend Adoration with a Preschool Teacher.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

We provide two conferences each year. The first conference, which takes place in the fall, focuses on our curriculum and specific learning goals for the upcoming school year. Teachers document learning experiences of all children in the class through observation notes, photographs and work samples. We send home some items weekly, display other items in the classroom environment and send home the remainder in the portfolio at the end of the year. The second conference will feature your child's portfolio and a discussion will ensue regarding if we feel, based on observations in the classroom, if your child is ready for kindergarten or could benefit from another year of growth. Our classroom themes rotate every three years so it is very unlikely that your child would repeat the same activities, and if so, they would be older and approach the material in a different way.

If there are educational or behavioral concerns at any time, a conference will be scheduled with the parents. We encourage parents to contact the director if concerns or questions arise.

## **A NOTE ABOUT KINDERGARTEN READINESS**

We at St. Mary, firmly believe that childhood is not a race to graduation. Every child develops at a pace that is unique to them and possesses gifts given to them by God. Some children will excel in areas that others may need additional assistance. That is why we individualize our curriculum, using our observational notes as a guide. We also believe that it is more than a child's chronological age that makes them truly "ready" for kindergarten. Following is a brief (but not inclusive) list of things we look at when preparing for a parent-teacher conference:

Can the child:

- follow simple two-step directions such as "Use the bathroom and change into your outside shoes?"
- recognize and name basic shapes; square, circle, triangle, and rectangle
- hold a pencil or crayon using a tripod grip?
- cut with scissors correctly (thumb in the correct hole and facing up while cutting)?
- write their first name?
- recognize their first name?
- recognize numerals 1-12, even when out of order?
- count to 20 aloud
- count 10 objects, pointing to each one as she counts?
- say or sing the alphabet?
- recognize the letters of the alphabet (upper case) even when out of order?
- sort items by size, color, and shape
- hold a book upright and turn pages
- identify basic concepts of print such as front cover, back cover, and the role of illustrator and author
- tell if two words rhyme
- identify some letter sounds
- use ordinal numbers such as first, second, and third
- say parents' full name and say the town they live in
- possess self-help skills: Put on a coat without assistance and zip it up, hang a backpack on hook, change shoes without assistance, puts on and takes off
- winter clothing without assistance, open food containers at lunch, raise hand and wait to be called on, stand in a line without hurting other children, takes care of bathroom needs on their own, cough into their elbow, wipe nose after sneezing and wash hands, puts toolbox and toys away
- express basic needs using speech that is easily understood by teachers and peers
- put together a 16-piece tray puzzle without assistance
- put together a 20 or 24-piece puzzle with only minor assistance



## **COMMUNICATION**

We encourage daily communication between family and school. One teacher will always be at the doorway during arrival

If you leave us a note, email or voice mail message, we will do our best to respond during the children's rest period.

A monthly newsletter will be sent home with your child. The newsletter will contain information on the monthly theme and learning objectives. Other information is emailed weekly and will include upcoming events and general school information.

Learning experiences are documented through photographs, observation notes and projects displayed in the classroom and on the SeeSaw app. You may also find some of these experiences shared on the classroom page of the director's blog, and on related social media sites.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

We encourage family members to drop in, however please keep in mind that doing so during the first two months of school may be difficult on your child. If you are ever able to join us for lunch or for time on the playground, those may be easier times for your child to say good-bye to you again. If your child is crying at arrival time, please know that this is normal. We will call you if your child isn't able to be comforted and calmed down within a few minutes. We promise! Quite often they become distracted and settled in. This is why we provide a predictable schedule that includes familiar routines. Children find comfort in the predictable.

Due to COVID-19 recommendations, we must limit the number of people we have in our classroom at any one time, especially visitors. If you are having flu-like symptoms, please visit when you are symptom-free. We ask that all adult visitors wear a face mask and sanitize their hands upon arrival. Thank you for helping us keep a healthy and safe learning environment for your child.

## **FIELD TRIPS AND VOLUNTEERS**

We encourage parents to drop-in unannounced. If we leave the classroom, we will post a note on the door regarding our location.

Smoking and vaping must not occur on field trips and in vehicles when children are present.

## **TRANSPORTATION BY SCHOOL BUS AND ROUTINE TRANSPORTATION**

Children four-years old and older may use the bus transportation provided by our school or Suttons Bay Public School. Hands must be sanitized prior to entry on the bus and a mask must be worn. No food shall be eaten on the bus. A school staff member will escort the child off of the bus in the morning and on to the bus in the afternoon.

In your enrollment packet, you received a permission form that explains routine transportation and transportation on a school bus.

**St. Mary Preschool Comprehensive Background Check Policy for Staff and Unsupervised Volunteers**, which includes the principal of St. Mary School, preschool director, lead teacher, preschool aide and unsupervised volunteers which could include (but not limited to) a parent, student volunteer from a local educational facility or volunteer from a non-profit program

**State of Michigan Requirements as stated on pg. 5 of the Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers, effective December 18, 2019, Bureau of Community and Health Systems Child Care Licensing Division, LARA and on [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare):**

**“R 400.8112 Comprehensive background check; fingerprinting.**

(1) Pursuant to sections 5n and 5q of the act, MCL 722.115n and 722.115q, before an individual has unsupervised contact with children, the department shall determine the individual’s eligibility to be any of the following:

- a. A licensee (Mrs. Glynn)
- b. A licensee designee (Mrs. Anderson)
- c. A child care staff member (Mrs. Anderson)
- d. A child care aide (Mrs. Plamondon, Mrs. Couturier)
- e. An unsupervised volunteer (see list at top of document)”

2. An applicant or licensee shall make sure that each individual has undergone a comprehensive background check that includes fingerprinting and is registered in the child care background check system.

3. “An individual may serve as a child care staff member pending an eligibility determination by the department under sections 5n(8) and 5q of the act, MCL 722.115n and 722.115q, and shall be supervised at all times by the licensee or a child care staff member who has been determined eligible.”

4. “For an individual who is determined ineligible by the department, a licensee shall immediately do all of the following:

- Prohibit the individual from being on the premises of the child care center.
- Prohibit the individual from having any contact with children in care.
- Disconnect the individual from the child care background check system.”

All supervised volunteers shall receive a public sex offender registry (PSOR) clearance before having any contact with a child in care. A copy of this clearance must be kept on file at the center.

5. “A written statement must be signed and dated by staff and volunteers at the time of hiring or before volunteering indicating all of the following information:

- The individual is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.

- The individual has been informed of the center's policies of child abuse and neglect.
- The individual knows that all staff and volunteers are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to children's protective services."

6. All staff and volunteers who have contact with children at least 4 hours per week for more than 2 consecutive weeks is free from communicable tuberculosis (TB). Verification of TB status is required within 1 year before employment or volunteering.

**Diocese of Gaylord Policy:** In order to protect our vulnerable populations, the Diocese of Gaylord has instituted policies that require regular volunteers of 8 hours or less a month to complete an ICHAT and Virtus training. Please note that a parent who attends school functions on a regular basis such as classroom celebrations and field trips is considered a volunteer and will need an ICHAT and Virtus Training. A parent who would like to accompany the group on a field trip needs an ICHAT on file. A parent who would like to visit the classroom does not need a criminal clearance check. These requirements are in addition to the requirements listed above and mandated by LARA.

## **DRESS CODE POLICY**

Please keep in mind that in preschool we explore and experiment with many new things and play clothes are preferred and recommended for daily wear in school. The exception is on school picture day when students can wear more formal or dress clothes if desired. Young girls that wear dresses should also wear shorts or leggings to preserve modesty. Please, no tank-tops or spaghetti straps. Since we spend much time on our school playground we ask that students wear close-toed shoes to prevent injury from the wood chips on the playground. Shoes should be slip-on, have Velcro or bungee ties if the child cannot tie their own shoes. Your child will be expected to put on and take off outdoor clothing and shoes on their own. Teachers will assist only after a child has attempted on their own. For this reason, we ask that parents refrain from doing these self-help tasks for their child.

Please provide rain boots and jacket for Fall and Spring, complete winter gear, including 2 pairs of waterproof mittens, snow pants, snow jacket, hat and boots.

We will provide your child with a St. Mary Preschool t-shirt to be worn on Faith First Fridays and school field trips.

A complete set of clothing including underwear, socks, pants and shirt are to be kept at the school and changed out with the seasons. Please label and place in a zip lock baggie, and store in your child's locker. Please label EVERYTHING as snow pants and mittens begin to look similar and we want to make sure items go home with the correct child.

## **DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE**

All members of the St. Mary Catholic School community have the right to a healthy and safe environment, respectful treatment by others, freedom from harassment and abuse, and a positive learning environment.

Our discipline and guidance policy centers on helping the child maintain self-control, preserving his or her dignity and keeping everyone safe. We accomplish this by setting realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations. We uphold classroom rules consistently, plan ahead in an effort to avoid problems, encourage children to talk to each other and work problems out, redirect and/or suggest other possibilities when a problem arises, and we stay in close contact with parents, communicating behaviors that need improvement as well as achievements.

When necessary, a teacher may sit out with a child as an opportunity for a child to calm down and regain control. This is helpful when a child lacks control of their physical body due to being upset or another heightened emotion. In general, we do not send a child to "time out." Children are not told they will "give us minutes from recess" as children need safe physical outlets.

The classroom environment is carefully planned with the children's needs and interests in mind. This includes multiple toys and plenty of learning centers and spaces for learning.

Throughout the year, we will refer to our 3 classroom rules. Our choices need to be **healthy**, **helpful** and **safe**. Teachers will model appropriate behavior and expectations that are developmentally appropriate for children 3-6 years of age. When required, a teacher will quietly speak to a child or group of children who are exercising a poor choice. The teacher will ask the child how they can redirect their own behavior and offer guidance as needed. Only when a child refuses to listen to a teacher, or has what we refer to as "really big feelings" will a child be walked to the quiet area. There is absolutely no shame associated to the quiet area and it is actually used as a place where a child will eventually learn they can visit on their own. Children are encouraged to visit the quiet area and stay there until they are calm. Through teacher modeling, children will learn what "calm" looks like, such as our hands are no longer clenched, we are no longer having our big feelings, etc. The child is then encouraged to rejoin their classmates when they experience this sense of calm, as safety for all children and teachers is a priority at all time. Learning self-control and self-regulation is our goal for all children in our program.

Children are encouraged to take immediate responsibility for poor choices. If their choice involves hurting another person emotionally or physically, the teaching staff will guide the child in how they can take responsibility make amends. For example, one of the common choices that occur in a preschool classroom, is a child hitting another child because they want a turn at a toy. Below is an example of how this may be worked out with all parties and with guidance provided by the teacher:

*Teacher:* I am going to hold this block while we work things out. Emily, you hit Sam. Sam, are you OK? I need you both to stand here with me a moment.

*Emily:* I wanted that block.

*Teacher:* What would be a safe and helpful way to get something you want like this block?

*Emily:* She shares a possibility such as asking Sam.

*Teacher:* That sounds like a good idea. Emily, you need to tell Sam that you shouldn't have hit him and ask him if he is OK.

*Emily:* I shouldn't have hit you, are you OK?

*Sam:* No, my arm hurts.

*Teacher:* Could you get an ice pack for Sam?

*Emily:* Gets the ice pack and helps the teacher apply it to Sam's arm.

*Teacher:* Please ask Sam if he forgives you.

*Emily:* Do you forgive me?

*Sam:* He has the right to say yes or no. If he says no...

*Teacher:* I bet Sam's arm is really hurting, so let's give him a chance to calm down and for the ice to help his arm feel better. We will check in on him again in a few minutes.

*Teacher and Emily* will check in on Sam again, where forgiveness is encouraged and attention given to Sam's sore arm.

As you can see, taking responsibility for one's own actions is a process and one that needs to be practiced again and again. About mid-year, we typically see children going through this process with very little guidance needed from teachers, which is exactly what we are striving for. We want to encourage children to be thoughtful and responsible members of our school community and the community at large. The school and home are safe places to practice these life skills.

In accordance with State of Michigan, Division of Child Care Licensing Rule 400.8140, (2) all of the following means of punishment shall be prohibited:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
  - Placing any substances in a child's mouth, including but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
  - Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
  - Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
  - Depriving a child of meals, snacks rest or necessary toilet use.
  - Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
  - Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
  - Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box or similar enclosure
- (3) Non-severe and developmentally appropriate discipline or restraint may be used when reasonably necessary, based on a child's development, to prevent a child from harming himself or herself or to prevent a child from harming other persons or property, excluding those forms of punishment by sub rule (2) of this rule.

Our program reserves the right to terminate services to children who present a danger to self, other children, or adults or after many other avenues have been explored by teacher and parent.

Teachers and administrators will make every effort to modify inappropriate behavior, using the techniques mentioned above. Behavior difficulties will be discussed with parents before termination is put into effect, unless the child has caused serious injury to another child or staff member. In that case, parents will be called and termination will be immediate.

## **LICENSING RECORDS OF ST. MARY PRESCHOOL**

The center does not keep a licensing notebook, but internet is available onsite. Reports from at least the last three years are available at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare). Our license number is DC 450283755.

## **INCIDENT, ACCIDENT, INJURY, ILLNESS, DEATH, FIRE REPORTING**

In the event of an emergency, first aid will be administered, and the school will attempt to notify the parent immediately by phone. If deemed necessary, the school will call 911. The school must be notified if a child suffers from epilepsy, asthma, allergies, or other conditions that might cause fainting or other serious symptoms so that proper procedures might be followed with the least possible trauma to the child.

In the event of a minor injury such as a scrape, splinter or bump due to a tumble on the playground or other similar situation, the teacher will fill out a minor injury form and notify you of the injury at pick up. Please examine your child's injury and sign the form and return to school. We will place the original in your child's school file. If you would like a copy, we are happy to provide you with one. More serious injuries, including, but not limited to, one child biting another will require a call home in addition to the form that will be provided at pick up.

Other incidents that we pray will never be a reality, however a plan of action is required. An incident that would require an immediate phone call to the parent: one child touching another child inappropriately, an inappropriate incident between a child and staff member, a lost child, death of a child in care, a fire on the premises that requires the use of fire suppression equipment or results in loss of life or property, or the center is evacuated for any reason. The director is also required to report this information to the State of Michigan, Department of Child Care Licensing.

The program director will report to the State of Michigan, Department of Child Care Licensing via phone, fax, or email within 24 hours of notification by a parent that a child received medical treatment or was hospitalized for an injury, accident, or medical condition that occurred while the child was in care. The director will then submit a written report to the department of the occurrences listed above, within 72 hours of the verbal report to the department. A copy of the report will be kept on file at the school.

## **PESTICIDE USE – NOTIFICATION POLICY**

Annually, schools must advise parents of their rights to be informed when any pesticide application is made to the school grounds or building. Parents receive written notification of our



policy during enrollment. Parents chose if and how they wish to be contacted prior to pesticide application. We will post the notice in the classroom three days prior to the application. St. Mary School may apply pesticides once or twice a year on the grass and around landscaping. Rodent or insect bait with either be in child-proof containers or placed out of reach of children. Children will not be allowed to use the grassy areas that pesticide was applied to for the time period specified by the pesticide service.

## **REPORTING OBLIGATIONS**

School staff and administration are obligated by law to report the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse and/or neglect. It is not our place to determine what happened, only to report symptoms or signs listed in the Mandated Reporting Guide found online at [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#). The school cannot contact parents in advance of making a report to the Child Protective Services.

## **STAFFING AND TRAINING**

St. Mary Catholic School adheres to the rules and regulations of the State of Michigan, division of Child Care Licensing when staffing the preschool program. St. Mary Catholic School and Church conducts criminal history background screenings on all teachers and staff. Preschool staff receive yearly training in licensing administrative rules, blood borne pathogens, civil rights training for the federal food program, Shaken Baby Syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment and recognition of reporting child abuse and neglect. Training in Pediatric First Aid and CPR is conducted every two years. Other training includes, but is not limited to, a staff members role and duties during emergency evacuation procedures (covered twice a year), health care services plan, diocesan wide in-service trainings, child development, best practices in early childhood, curriculum, the release of children, administration of medications, supervision, and communication with parents, etc. In addition, each member of the preschool staff is required to complete 16 hours of early childhood training annually and is required by the Diocese of Gaylord to participate in at least 5 hours of catechetical training each school year.

## Receipt of Preschool Handbook

I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge receiving a copy (either digitally or in paper format) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). I understand that as a parent, guardian or staff member, I am required to follow the policies and procedures listed in this document. I have asked questions regarding any item that was not clear to me and am confident in the explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)