

Pre-School Handbook

August 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians of St. Ray's Preschool Program,

Welcome to our family! We know pre-school is an important step for you and your child. This may be the first time you are away from your child. For others, this is the next step beyond daycare. Know that we honor, appreciate, and love every child that walks through our door. We give our best every day to make our families feel their investment in St. Ray's is worth more than what you have paid.

Educating your child socially, emotionally, spiritually and academically is a partnership you have created with us. This partnership can't be at its best if we are not on the same page. This handbook provides the expectations and guidelines we have for all students and their families in our early childhood program. Please read through it carefully and rely on its contents for future reference during the school year. Please complete the acknowledgement form and return it to your child's teacher.

Thank you for trust and dedication to St. Ray's. Together, let us begin this year with a commitment to partnership as we support one another in helping your child become the best person he/she is capable of becoming.

In Christ,

Ms. Marjorie Hill, Principal

Mrs. Jen Christiansen and Mrs. Michelle Elias, Teachers

Mission of St. Ray's

At the Cathedral of St. Raymond School, we uniquely challenge every student with an education of unparalleled quality, but more importantly, we teach children to be kind, compassionate, **and to share Christ's light with the world.**

Age Requirements

Our preschool program is for students that have turned 3 or 4 by September 1st. We have several options available for families.

Students who are 3 years old by September 1st are eligible to enroll in our half-day or full-day program. Our half-day program, for 3 year olds, meets on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7:55am – 11am. We have two options for our 3 year old full-day program. Students can either enroll in the Monday, Wednesday and Friday session or in the Monday – Friday session. Both sessions meet from 7:55am – 3:00pm.

Students who are 4 years old by September 1st are eligible to enroll in our half-day program or full-day program. Our half-day program, for 4 year olds, meets on Monday – Friday from 8am – 11pm. Our full-day program is Monday – Friday from 8am – 3:00pm.

Classes in our preschool are determined by student's age and date of birth. Our half day students are often in classes with full day students. Depending on students' birthdates, we frequently have a class that has both 3 and 4 year olds. It is not uncommon for one of our pre-school classes to include the oldest 3 year olds and the youngest 4 year olds.

Goals of St. Ray's Preschool Program

1. Advance academically through developmentally appropriate practice and intentional play
2. Encourage the development of democratic life skills (prosocial behaviors)
 - a. Finding acceptance as a member of the group and as a worthy individual
 - b. Expressing emotions in a non-hurting way
 - c. Solving problems creatively-independently and in cooperation with others
 - d. Accepting unique human qualities in others
 - e. Thinking intelligently and ethically
3. Encourage the growth of independence and self-motivation
4. Encourage the development of creative thinking
5. Develop many avenues for self-expression
6. Build relationships that will last to 8th grade and beyond

Importance of Play

"Play: the highest form of research." --Albert Einstein

Play is important for a child's development and for children to bond. Much learning occurs during play time. Here is a sample of all that can happen when children are engaged in play:

The following is a list of possible centers used at St. Ray's and the learning that occurs within each center:

Art/Writing Center

- Enhances creativity

- Promotes fine motor skills
- Cognitive thinking allows for children to think of what they would like to create, draw or write
- Communication skills and critical thinking when children explain the story behind their art
- Comes in many forms and promotes the use of different materials: crayons, pencils, markers, chalk, different types of paint and paper, stamps, stencils, letters, and art tools
- Expression of feelings and emotions

Block Center:

- Allows their imagination to flow and allows them to create something using their own thinking
- Gain self-confidence by having the ability to build something
- Incorporate math by learning about sizes and shapes, weights and balances, height and depth, smoothness and roughness
- Builds social and emotional skills by interacting and playing with friends

Paint:

- Learn, explore and experiment with colors by mixing them
- Use their imagination to think about a drawing and bring it to life on paper
- Building small muscle coordination while using the paintbrush
- Make choices and decisions about what color they are going to choose and what they are going to paint

Housekeeping/Dramatic Play Area:

- Opportunity to play various roles: mother, father, doctor, policeman, fireman, grocery store clerk, waitress, etc.)
- Children will help to create, become involved in, maintain, or extend a play scenario
- Social and emotional development: interacting with children during play through their actions and language
- Use of cognitive thinking and imagination during role playing
- Children will help to create, become involved in, maintain, or extend a play scenario
- Exposure and use of various materials
- Development of both gross and fine motor skills

Puzzles:

- Work independently or with friends
- Build confidence by independently solving a puzzle or solving a puzzle with friends
- Build hand-eye coordination

Library:

- Creates a reading habit
- Promotes early literacy and builds their language
- Increases their love and appreciation for books
- Stimulates their mind by reading the pictures to determine the story
- Learn how to ask and answer questions about the story

Math Manipulatives

- Promotion of fine motor skills
- Sorting and ordering

- Discovering patterns
- Shapes
- Measurement
- Problem solving and reasoning
- Number concepts
- Representation

Technology Center

- Supports and enhances learning
- Caters to different learning styles through different games/activities
- Effective for problem solving, communication and illustration of thoughts, ideas and stories

Prayer

Praying in school is one of the special things that bind us in our Catholic faith. We will pray several times a day with our students. We typically pray first thing when we arrive, before lunch or snack and at the end of the school day. We have listed the common prayers that we say at school. Please take time to say these prayers at home and practice them with your child.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Mass Attendance

Because our young ones are just getting used to school and their attention spans are limited, the preschool classrooms will not regularly attend mass with the 1st-8th grade. However, there are a number of times they will join the rest of the school in celebration of the Holy Eucharist of the Mass. Your child's teacher will communicate with families which days the students will attend.

Adjustment Period

Separation anxiety is a normal stage of transition for many children of preschool age. To make a smooth transition for the children, parents are encouraged to say their "good-byes" and leave right away. Prolonging the transition will disrupt the classroom environment for the other children and make the situation more difficult for your child. To help in easing the transition, we suggest that you tell your child that you will be dropping him/her off for a period of time and that you will return to pick up when school is over.

Arrival Procedures

Students in preschool may arrive any time between 7:30 and 7:55. We gather as a preschool community in the school commons through door #1. During this time, the aides are supervising the children. At 7:40, the teachers come down and walk their students to the classroom. If you arrive after the classes have gone to their rooms, a member of the St. Ray's staff will walk the child to his/her classroom.

Departure Procedure

Students enrolled in our half day program are dismissed from door #26 at 11:00. Students enrolled in our full day program dismiss at 3:00 from door #1. We will check the ID of any adult who is picking up your child for the first time. This helps us make sure students make it home safely. Any children not picked up by 3:05 will be taken to EDS. If your child stays for extended day, he/she will be taken to the school library by the classroom aide and you will be charged the appropriate rate.

Parking

Besides street parking, parking is available north of Centennial Walkway. The first row of this parking lot is partitioned off out of safety for our children. We do not want students walking between cars so close to the Valet line. We want them to be easily visible.

Please do not park in the safety zone--the parking area between Centennial Walkway and the school building. This area is designated for students in grades K-8 to stand at arrival and dismiss in the afternoon. Please park in a designated spot.

Attire

Students in our preschool program do not have a uniform. Please make sure your child comes in clothes that they can manage independently. A complete set of clothing should be provided at the beginning of the year in case of emergencies. Have each piece clearly labeled with your child's name. Coats, jackets hats, etc. should also be labeled with your child's name.

On days your child has gym please make sure they come in appropriate shoes. Closed toe shoes with a back are required on gym days. Sandals may be worn on other days.

Our classrooms go outside for recess as much as possible. Please check the forecast and send your child in appropriate layers. In winter months please send mittens/gloves, hats, scarves, snow pants, boots and warm coats for outside recess.

Backpacks

Please send your child to school with a full size back pack. A toddler/pre-school back pack is too small for folders to fit into. Thank you for adhering to this.

Food and Lunches

The Cathedral of St. Raymond School does not have a hot lunch program. All food that students eat is packed at home and brought to school. Students enrolled in the full-day preschool program must bring a lunch each day. Full-day students are able to sign up and pay for daily milk at lunch. Preschool classes also have a morning snack.

Please note that we have a Shared Food Policy and special precautions put in place for students with food allergies. These policies can be found in our Parent Student Handbook. If your child has a food allergy please contact the front office before the start of the school year to set up a meeting and discuss how we can best keep your child safe at school.

Assessment and Conferences

Teachers are assessing and evaluating students' progress on a daily basis. What students say and do allows teachers to make strategic moves in the moment and for the next lesson. The focus of pre-school is not about hitting specific benchmarks by a certain time. Early childhood is developmental and often involves a readiness

factor. Comparing your child to another child is not recommended because there are so many factors that play into a child's progress.

Teachers in pre-school also fill out an assessment record three times a year. Students are placed on a continuum of exceeding expectation, meeting expectation or needing improvement. The areas that are assessed include: foundational skills for learning, empathy skills, emotion management and self-regulation, friendship skills and problem solving, language development, religion, reading, writing, and math readiness, and gross and fine motor skills.

Parent/teacher conferences are held in November and March. This is mandatory for every family. Teachers are available throughout the year for conferences, but we ask parents to arrange this ahead of time, rather than show up unexpectedly.

Discipline

Part of growing up is learning who you are and how to make good choices. No child is perfect and when a student makes a poor choice, we want that to be a learning opportunity, not a time to give a punitive consequence. At St. Ray's we believe it is important to point out the positive; however, if a child does make a poor choice, a natural consequence is given. For example, if a child keeps grabbing a toy from another child in one of the center areas, they would be removed from that center and would not be allowed to return until he/she can show us they can share or ask nicely for the toy, instead of just grabbing it.

If a student is consistently making poor choices, the teacher will contact the parent. If this behavior disrupts the learning environment, a parent/teacher conference will be held to address the behavior(s). Possible outcomes could be an individualized behavior plan, counseling sessions with the social worker, and/or recommendation for outside services.

We also want to recognize children who go above and beyond with their actions and examples. Teachers will share this good news with parents. The child will be recognized in class for modeling exceptional behavior.

Biting

Providing a safe environment for every child to learn and play is of utmost importance to St. Ray's. If a child bites, kicks, hits, scratches, spits, or pinches, the child will be removed from the group setting and a parent is notified. This serves as a serious warning. If a mark is left on another child, the child will be immediately removed from class and an adult will need to pick the child up. The child will not be allowed to attend school the next day. If the pattern continues, a parent/teacher/principal conference will be held to discuss if this is the right time for the child to be in school. Forced withdrawal or voluntary transfer could be the end result.

Child Protection

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 cases when the physical and/or emotional safety of any child is in suspect, the suspicion will be communicated to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Details regarding any individual child's protection are a matter held in strictest confidence by all adults involved. The calls are anonymous.

Communication

We value our partnership with parents and communication is vital to making the best experience for you and your child. We believe students will excel when parents and teachers work together. Keeping informed of our approach to teaching and learning as well as the day to day activities will allow parents to be the most involved in their child's education.

Students will come home every day with a green home folder. Please return the folder every day.

A family envelope is sent home every Thursday with oldest/only children (for M-W-F three year olds it goes home on Friday). Important all school notices are included in this envelope. Flyers for after-school activities, announcements, etc. are a part of the envelope. The contents of the family envelope are also emailed through School Speak and titled News You Can Use (NYCU). If you are not regularly receiving emails from School Speak, please contact Kelly Alt in the front office.

All of our teachers are available via email or by phone through the main school number.

School Phone Number – 815-722-6626

Mrs. Christiansen's email: jchristiansen@csrn.org

Mrs. Elias's email: melias@csrn.org

Teachers will also send home weekly updates on the learning that occurred during the week through Seesaw. Teachers are always available to conference with parents at arrival, dismissal, via email, or by phone. Please note teachers have 24 hours to respond to emails and phone calls.

Nap Time

Full day students take a nap daily. Students are allowed to bring in blankets and pillows to help them rest and relax. Your child may also bring a small favorite stuffed animal to help them during nap time. Toys to play with are not allowed. Students who don't sleep have time to lie quietly on their cots and rest.

Labeling

To avoid giving students the wrong items, please make sure you label your child's pillow, blanket, lunch box, back pack and extra clothes. Materials and supplies do not need to be labeled as they are put together for group use.

Birthdays

We love celebrating birthdays at St. Ray's! Our preference is to celebrate your child's birthday in ways other than food. Instead, you could purchase your child's favorite book and donate it to the classroom. This is a gift that keeps on giving well beyond the instant gratification of food. Another idea would be to send a non-food special treat in for every child. Past items include birthday pencils, stickers, coloring books, etc.

Party Invitations

If you are having a party, please send the invitations to the child's home or through email. Party invitations may only be distributed in the class if every child is being invited or if all the girls are being invited or all the boys.

Volunteering/Parent Participation

We value and appreciate parent volunteers. We couldn't do nearly half of what we are able to do without parents giving generously of their time. Opportunities to volunteer include, but are not limited to: reading and/or assisting a class, acting as a room parent, sending things from home or completing a task for a teacher at home, chaperoning a field trip, taking a leadership role on a school committee, etc.

Each volunteer must have the following information completed and on file in the school office:

1. Virtus Training (Protecting God's Children)

2. Criminal Background Check completed (must be renewed every 5 years)
3. Written acknowledgement of *Pastoral Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors* and the *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors* (both documents may be downloaded at www.dioceseofjoliet.org/protecting)

Accidents and Injuries

In the event your child has a minor accident or injury, teachers will fill out an accident report and send it home to you that day. A copy is also given to the principal so that she may remain informed. If a child has an injury to the head, a phone call will be made. Based on the facts provided, parents can make a decision on whether to pick up the child immediately or wait until the end of the day.

Sickness

If a child becomes ill while at school, a phone call will be made to the parents. If the parents cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called. A student who has vomited or has a temperature must be picked up immediately. Children need to remain home at least 24 hours after a fever or vomiting has subsided.

Role of Preschool Support Staff

We are grateful to have knowledgeable aides in each of our preschool classrooms. Our support staff is primarily here to assist the teacher and students in day-to-day routines and activities and help us have a successful year. Any questions or concerns you have about your child's academic or social/emotional progress should be directed to the teachers.

Bathroom Expectations

Your child is expected to be completely potty-trained when entering school. This means that your child can independently use the school's bathroom urinals or stalls appropriately, wipe themselves, and communicate the need to go. Pull-ups are not permitted. Teachers and aides are not permitted to assist or help clean your child in the event of an accident, unless written permission is given. If an accident occurs the child will be assisted to the bathroom, but will be required to change their clothes independently. If a child is NOT able to do this, parents will be called and required to come assist their child. If a child consistently has accidents, a meeting will be held to discuss the readiness of your child for school.

St. Ray's School Preschool Handbook Acknowledgment Form

This 2019-2020 Preschool Handbook is an important document that should be read and discussed at home. It is expected that you are familiar and understand the policies and procedures of the school. We understand that you agreed to adhere to these policies and procedures of the school when you registered your child. We ask that you spend some extra time to review all of the sections of the handbook and to save this document for future reference.

After you have read the handbook and have reviewed its contents, we ask that you return this page signed to your child's homeroom teacher. We must have a signed copy of this letter on file for every family.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,



Ms. Marjorie Hill, Principal

Our family has read and discussed the St. Ray's School Preschool Handbook and we agree to be in full compliance with the outlined policies and procedures.

Family Name _____

Child's Homeroom Teacher _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____