



License #C13HI0151

Excellence in Catholic Education for 40 Years

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026-2027

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Accredited by:

National Association for the Education of Young Children

State of Florida Quality Gold Seal School

State of Florida VPK Provider

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WELCOME TO ST. PAUL CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL

We believe families are the most important part of a child's life and we welcome you as contributors to our program. Throughout the year, families will have many opportunities to volunteer their time and talents to enhance our early childhood program, meet with one another, provide support for each other, and to work together on projects to support the program. We look forward to a positive relationship with our families and feel strongly that open communication is essential in meeting your child's needs. St. Paul Catholic Preschool has an open-door policy whereby families are welcome to visit the program at any time.

Open House is scheduled yearly to enable new families to visit our school, to see our facilities, meet the Director, teachers/staff, and visit classrooms prior to applying. Family Orientation and Meet & Greet at the beginning of the school year are designed to help children and families become acquainted and to help ease the transition into school life.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Paul Catholic Preschool's mission is to encourage the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth of each child using developmentally appropriate practices. Working in partnership with family members as well as our parish and community, we provide a nurturing, safe, Catholic environment where children are free to learn, play and grow.

PHILOSOPHY

Our age-grouped classes encourage children to be actively involved in the learning process. Activities are designed to foster a knowledge of self-concept, develop social skills, and encourage children to think, reason, question, and experiment. All activities are planned to encourage the development of faith life, language, physical, and creative expression, and to promote sound health, safety, and nutritional practices. Personality and language are largely formed by the sixth birthday, so we view these early experiences as vital to a child's growth and development.

GOALS OF ST. PAUL CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL

- To create an atmosphere where spiritual values are taught and developed
- To encourage the unique qualities of each child
- To cultivate in each child respect for self and others
- To provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum which strives to meet the individual needs of all children
- To maintain a positive classroom atmosphere where love of learning is encouraged
- To provide a physical environment that is safe, clean and child-oriented
- To assist children in exploring and broadening their sense of discovery
- To create a caring, nurturing atmosphere that fosters creativity
- To develop a child's receptive and expressive language skills
- To provide a variety of manipulative activities which encourage the understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts
- To develop physical coordination, gross and fine motor skills
- To cultivate an understanding and respect for others including those who are different in race, color, religion, creed, gender, age, national origin, ability, and social status
- To broaden each child's knowledge of his/her community
- To create an atmosphere of mutual respect between families and teachers, which includes frequent communication to ensure a quality program for each child
- To maintain collaborative relationships with families
- To provide opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development activities and the freedom

- to create a unique learning experience for children
- To provide leadership and to work with others toward improving the conditions of children and families within our program, the local community, our region, and in the world

GENERAL INFORMATION

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is an early childhood center under the umbrella of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Office of Catholic Schools and Centers. It is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and licensed by the Department of Children and Families; we are also a State of Florida VPK Provider. St. Paul Catholic Preschool was also awarded a Gold Seal Quality of Care by the Department of Children and Families Child Care Services.

Our school offers a half day program, maintaining a ratio of one staff person to every 6 children for our 2-year-olds, one staff person to every 9 children for 3-year-olds, and one staff person to every 10 children for 4-year-olds. We provide qualified and experienced teachers to work with your child.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is first and foremost a Catholic school and a community of faith. We believe that religious formation is extremely important and should be part of our daily lives. We are developing a clear foundation of our Catholic faith and expect parents and families to lead by example. We provide religious opportunities through all our curriculum and lessons, weekly faith formation lessons, prayer services, praise, and worship songs, utilizing the various spiritual statues and locations on our campus, and regular visits to the classrooms by our clergy.

Catholic families are expected to fully participate in the religious formation of students within the home as well as their faithful observance of the Sunday Mass obligation; it is also expected that families are active within our faith and school community. This demonstrates donating our time and talents within our religious family and is never too early to teach our children. Please make sure when you are participating in weekly Mass to utilize the envelope system, online offertory, or online giving. Our Parish tuition rate and the possibility of receiving tuition assistance are contingent on weekly Sunday Mass attendance which is tracked through the envelopes.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

St. Paul Catholic Preschool admits students of any race, color, sex, national origin, and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. All decisions concerning admission and continued enrollment are based on the student's emotional, academic, and physical abilities, as well as the resources available to the school in meeting each child's unique needs.

We are committed to supporting the individual needs of every child. However, there may be circumstances where our center is not the most appropriate environment for children with certain special needs. In such cases, enrollment and continued care are conditional upon the consent of the Director. All children are admitted on a two-month probationary period, during which time staff and administration assess the child's developmental, social, and academic needs to determine the suitability of our program.

To help us provide the most supportive learning environment, families of children with identified learning, developmental, or behavioral needs are expected to proactively share relevant information. This includes educational evaluations, prior support services, specialized placements, and any other factors that may impact the child's experience at school. Open and timely communication allows us to collaborate effectively and create a positive, inclusive experience.

While St. Paul Catholic Preschool strives to meet the needs of all students, we are only equipped to serve children with mild learning differences. We are not able to accommodate children with more intensive special needs. Families are required to disclose any known disabilities, learning or behavioral diagnoses, prior interventions, or significant family factors that may require special educational programming. The probationary period gives our team the opportunity to determine if we can meet the child's needs safely and effectively. Children must be able to participate in and substantially benefit from our program without posing a risk to themselves or others.

We make every effort to understand and support each child as an individual. If there are specific considerations we should be aware of—such as speech or hearing challenges, behavioral concerns, or recent changes in family circumstances—please share this information with your child's teacher and/or the Director before the start of school. The more we know, the better we can support your child's success and well-being.

RIGHT TO MODIFY

St. Paul Catholic Preschool reserves the right to alter, amend, or otherwise modify these guidelines, in its sole discretion, without prior notice. We recognize that no handbook can anticipate every situation, and as such, this guide is intended to provide general policies and procedures—flexibility and professional judgment may be necessary in unique circumstances.

LICENSING

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is licensed by the State of Florida through the Department of Children and Families. Our License is posted outside the Director's office. The license is subject to renewal on a yearly basis.

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

ADMISSION POLICY

Preference is given to currently enrolled students and registered, participating members of St. Paul Catholic Church. Registered members of neighboring Catholic parishes and others are admitted on a space-available basis.

Age Requirements:

Two-year-olds...2 years old on or before September 1st

Three-year-olds...3 years old on or before September 1st

Four-year-olds...4 years old on or before September 1st

Proof of age is required with application. Children enrolled in the 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes must be **fully toilet trained** by the beginning of school in August. Successful toilet training entails the ability to recognize the need to use the bathroom and to independently manage all aspects of bathroom routines such as undressing, dressing, wiping, flushing and handwashing. Occasional accidents, once or twice a week at most, are understandable. We follow the Diocesan Safe Environment guidelines in these situations.

We reserve the right to deny admission to the school *on any given day* as it relates to issues such as health, attendance, tardiness, behavior, immunization records, custody, domestic situations, etc. We also reserve the right to remove a child from the program on a permanent basis due to the failure of abiding by the policies of this program. Families will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

SCHOOL HOURS AND CLASS SCHEDULE

2 Year Olds:

- 2 days (T/TH) → 8:15am - 11:30am
- 3 days (MWF) → 8:15am - 11:30am

3 Year Olds:

- 3 days (MWF) → 8:15am - 11:30am
- 5 days (M-F) → 8:15am - 11:30am

4 Year Olds:

- 5 days (M-F) → 8:15am - 12:00pm

PARKING

Families may park in the following lots: Church, Family Center, and by the playground.

Children are not to be left unattended in cars for any reason.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

The following procedures have been established for the safety of your children, as well as other families, parishioners and visitors to St. Paul Church and Preschool. It is imperative that all parents and caregivers carefully review and follow the arrival and dismissal procedures. A route has been established for dropping off and picking up children. All drivers are asked to familiarize themselves with the system that has been established for the safety of all. Please refer to the car line routing maps posted on our website; <https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool/resources/> (dismissal maps).

Upon arrival to school each day, the teaching staff responsible for your child will record the arrival time on an attendance log. Upon dismissal, the staff will again record the time of departure.

For the safety of the children, parishioners, and pedestrians, the use of cell phones is not permitted in the parking lot or car lines.

It is the responsibility of the parent or caretaker to supervise children and be responsible for their behavior whenever they are present on the church and preschool campus. Children are always required to be attended to and escorted by their parent or caregiver.

Keep in mind that these procedures are in place for safety reasons. Your cooperation is critical to the safety of all our children, staff, and parishioners. **Please convey arrival and dismissal procedures to those caregivers (such as grandparents, babysitters, and carpoolers) who will be dropping off and picking your children up from school.**

Although good communication between parent and teacher is essential, please make arrangements with teachers so that the car line is not used for lengthy conferences.

CAR LINE INFORMATION

When using the Car Line: Enter the property from the second entrance on Stall Road and approach the preschool from behind the playground. (Please see dismissal maps). To improve the efficiency of the car line,

you will be provided with a carline sign with your child's name on it. Please display the sign on your dashboard or hang from the rear-view mirror at dismissal. Once in the car line, it is not permissible to put your car in reverse to allow someone out of a parking spot. For dismissal, please put your vehicle in park and exit your vehicle. Your child's teacher will hand your child to you on the sidewalk by the crayon bollards. It is unsafe for children and staff to walk between cars in the car line. Please have your child enter your vehicle on the passenger side, then secure child in their seat **before moving forward**.

Please note, we strongly discourage idling vehicles in parking areas to help maintain a safe, healthy environment. Brief idling is permitted during extreme heat or cold when necessary to maintain safe interior or engine temperatures.

Parish Center Classroom Children:

- Can be picked up behind the Parish Center (by the crayon bollards). They will be escorted to their cars by staff or volunteers. Cars must exit the parking lot north of the property **via the Cascades shopping center or exit to Dale Mabry. No U-turns will be permitted in the car loop.**
- The option of walking into the Parish Center to pick up children is **not available**; all children will be dismissed by using the car line.

Children in Modular Classrooms:

- Can be picked up in the driveway of the modular buildings. Please note the Enter & Exit signs of the driveway. Cars should exit the property the same they entered (past the playground to Stall Road). All cars must turn right when exiting the modular carline.
- Families of 4-year-olds will have the option to park and walk to the pavilion for dismissal.

NOTE: Families who participate in a carpool MUST use the car line to pick up the group of children. The option of walking to pick up the children is not available to carpools.

ATTENDANCE & TARDINESS

Good habits lay the foundation for a successful school experience now and in the future. School calendars are distributed to families to assist you in planning family vacations. We strongly encourage you to plan your vacations during school vacations. Vacation related absences will be included in the total number of absences.

Please make every effort to be on time for school. If your child will be absent from school, please notify the school office by 9:00 AM by calling (813) 264-3314. Be sure to leave a voicemail or send an email to jwaibel@stpaulchurch.com and your child's teacher.

When reporting an absence, include the following information:

- Your child's full name
- The reason for the absence (including illness, if applicable)
- The dates of the absence
- Your child's teacher's name

As a safety precaution, if a child is not reported absent, the school will attempt to contact the family. Please remember that arriving late is a disruption and discourteous to the class already in session. When children are habitually late, their full participation in the program is hampered. If you arrive after **8:25 am**, your child is considered tardy. Please report to the school office by entering through the front doors of the Parish Center to sign your child in, then proceed to the classroom. We maintain the right to dismiss a child from the program for excessive tardiness. If a hardship arises, please contact the Director.

OTHER NOTES REGARDING ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

We are a half day program; therefore, our mornings are packed full of educational experiences. Please try to avoid making appointments during our school hours if possible. Parents who need to pick up their child from school early, such as for a doctor's appointment, will need to come to the school office to sign the child out of school. We realize that early dismissals and changes of transportation occur. If it is necessary to pick up your child before standard dismissal, please send a written note or email to the teacher/office so we are all aware of the changes.

Please remember that our students' safety is of the utmost importance; therefore, students will only be released to a parent/guardian or to an individual authorized by the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian's authorization to release a student to a non-parent/guardian must be listed on the release form kept in the office and with teachers and must show proper identification.

Our 4-year-olds families have the option of parking and walking to the Pavilion or using car line for pick up. Children will be dismissed to families on the Pavilion from 11:55am-12:00pm. The 4-year-old car line will begin at 12:00pm. Children who are picked up on the Pavilion will be released first before car riders. Those who arrive late to meet their child on the Pavilion will need to wait until all the children have been dismissed from the car line. For safety reasons, it is critical that the staff's attention is placed on the children being dismissed from the car line area.

Classes in the **Parish Center** will ONLY be dismissed through the car line which forms behind the Parish Center.

It is important that you do not walk into the buildings to pick up your child or take your child out of a dismissal line. The staff teach the children to stay with them **until** the teacher releases them to their family member. Please help us by reminding the children, as well as caregivers, of this safety rule.

If a student is being picked up early due to illness, they must be picked up and signed out in the school office located in the Parish Center.

LATE PICK UP

Please be prompt for dismissal as children are very uneasy when their caregiver is late to pick them up from school. Occasional tardiness at pick up is understood. Chronic lateness, however, is cause for concern. Warnings will be given for chronic lateness (10 minutes past dismissal time). After 3 warnings, **a late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child will be charged.** Carline dismissal ends at **11:45am** for the 2 and 3-year-olds and at **12:10pm** for the 4-year-olds.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

We ask that each caregiver be responsible for the close supervision and safety of any children that they bring on campus. Be mindful of safety concerns, always taking children by the hand. Children should not be permitted to run ahead of adults in the parking lots, on sidewalks, or inside buildings. We also ask that both adults and children be respectful of the church and plant life on the property. Please do not allow children to visit the fountain area, or pavilion without an adult. Please do not throw rocks, climb on fences or railings, trees, statues, or equipment. The playground is not open after school hours for family use and is solely used by the Preschool while school is in session.

All visitors to the school must enter the Parish Center through the front door and sign in with the receptionist. The two back doors of the Parish Center are always to remain locked. Only employees may use these doors for

entering the building. All visitors must first come to the school office in the Parish Center to be announced to the teachers in classrooms. Classroom doors are closed and locked during class times.

The Staff at St. Paul Catholic Preschool will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff of St. Paul Catholic Preschool or Church to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's rights to immediate access does not permit the agency from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, St. Paul Catholic Preschool and Church Staff will delay the impaired parent, if possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police, and Child Protective Services.

PAPERWORK

HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is required by law by the State of Florida to have a record of a current physical examination and certificate of immunization for every child. These are available at your physician's office or the health department. Continued enrollment in our program is contingent upon these forms being on file and up to date. As a courtesy, you may receive a reminder notice throughout the year when immunizations are due. Health records are stored in a locked cabinet in the school office and are only accessible to the Director, Assistant Director, the child's teachers, office assistants, the child's parents or legal guardians, and the Department of Children and Families.

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of St. Petersburg do not recognize a religious exemption to immunization.

Catholic Schools within the Diocese of St. Petersburg require all students to submit a valid Florida Department of Health Certificate of Immunization Form DH 680 through their physician as provided for in Florida Statute 1003.22. Catholic Schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg do not recognize religious or conscience objections to this immunization requirement. However, properly documented medical exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Medical Exemptions

All medical exemption forms, whether for a temporary or permanent exemption, must be sent to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for approval prior to the student's acceptance into the Catholic school. For each vaccination that the student is seeking an exemption, a licensed physician must list a contraindication and the physician's specific valid clinical reason for the contraindication. The school will not accept contraindications not currently included as a contraindication by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"). The school will not accept Form DH 680 without a written signature from a physician currently licensed by the State of Florida. If the exemption Form DH 680 is not visible on the Florida Shots website (www.flshots.com) and is not the same as the form sent to the Superintendent to approve, the student will not be able to enroll in the school. The Superintendent must be able to see the DH680 form certified and registered by the physician on the Florida Shots website before approval is granted for the student to enroll and attend school.

For More Information

More information about required school immunizations is available at the floridahealth.gov website.

In the case of a medical exemption, it may become necessary to exclude an under-immunized child from school if an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease incident occurs.

MEDICAL ALERT INFORMATION FORM

All parents/guardians of children enrolled in the school are required to complete a *notarized* **Medical Alert Information Form**. This form is to be used in case of a medical emergency. The information on this form includes the identification of a preferred hospital or medical facility, health insurance information for emergency medical treatment, transportation arrangements, and the individual emergency care plans for the child or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, orthopedic, medications or any other chronic conditions).

PERSONS PERMITTED TO REMOVE CHILD/AUTHORIZED PICK UPS

Children will be released only to the adults listed on the Student Information Form. Please include all family members, friends, carpool participants, and caregivers who are authorized to pick up your child from school.

In accordance with DCF licensing requirements, you must provide each authorized individual's full legal name, address, and phone number. We encourage you to plan ahead for unexpected situations or emergencies by including anyone who may need to pick up your child.

For the safety and security of all children, the name listed on the Student Information Form must match the individual's legal name exactly as it appears on their government-issued photo identification. Staff will not release a child to anyone whose name is not listed on the Student Information Form. Requests made by phone, email, or other means to authorize an unlisted individual to pick up your child on the same day cannot be accommodated.

Please advise everyone authorized to pick up your child that a valid government-issued photo ID is required before a child will be released. Displaying your child's car sign alone does not authorize an individual to pick up a child.

If you need to make changes to your child's authorized pick-up information, please notify the office. Parents or legal guardians must come to the office in person to update the Student Information Form. Changes cannot be made by phone or email.

PARENTS' RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access to their child without prior notice whenever they are in care at St. Paul Catholic Preschool. This policy is in effect unless an authority, such as a Law Enforcement Officer or Fire Safety Officer, places our facility on a lockdown due to an emergency. In such a situation, the authority of this officer takes precedence and overrides decisions about who may or may not enter a building.

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (example: Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), St. Paul Catholic Preschool must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) request a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared-joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with St. Paul Catholic Preschool, **both** parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. We cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason and will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

PROMOTIONAL / MEDIA RELEASE

During the school year, St. Paul Catholic Preschool may reproduce or participate in videotaping, website, motion picture, audio recording or still photograph productions that involve the use of student's names, likenesses, or voice. Such productions may be used for educational or exhibition purposes by St. Paul Catholic Church and Preschool or the Diocese of St. Petersburg and may be copied, copyrighted, edited, and distributed by St. Paul Catholic Preschool or the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

News media, including representatives of school publications, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and websites may take notes, still photos, sound recordings and/or moving pictures that may include your child. These items may appear or be used in news or feature stories by print, television, or radio media.

You have the right to consent or object to the use of your child's name, picture or voice in these productions and may do so by checking your preferences on the acknowledgment form at the end of this handbook.

KNOW YOUR CHILD CARE FACILITY

The Department of Children and Families requires that parents receive a copy of the childcare facility brochure, Know Your Child Care Facility. A copy of this brochure can be found on our website at <https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool/resources/>. Please acknowledge receipt of this brochure by initialing the acknowledgment page where this brochure is listed on the Family Handbook Acknowledgment at the end of this handbook.

DISTRACTED DRIVER

During the 2018 legislative session, a new law was passed that requires childcare facilities, family day care homes and large family childcare homes to provide parents, during the months of April and September each year, with information regarding the potential for distracted adults to fail to drop off a child at the facility/home and instead leave them in the adult's vehicle upon arrival at the adult's destination. A copy of this brochure can be found on our website at <https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool/resources/>. Please acknowledge receipt of this brochure by initialing the acknowledgment page where this brochure is listed on the Family Handbook Acknowledgement at the end of handbook.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS

As mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for the protection of young children, all schools and centers in the Diocese of St. Petersburg participate in the Safe Environment Program. All staff, according to Diocesan policy, have participated in the Safe Environment training program, which addresses the safety of all children. All persons with direct supervision of children (all employees, including substitute staff) have completed the Diocesan mandated Safe Environment training program, which includes initial and ongoing background screening.

Parent volunteers in a supervisory role of children must be background screened and take a Safe Environment Class in accordance with the policy of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. The purpose of the workshop is to foster healthy, loving relationships in the image of God.

Safe Environment Curriculum for Children: Through an age-appropriate curriculum, St. Paul Catholic Preschool weaves "safe environment" training for children into daily classroom life. Using games, songs, stories, and weekly religion series, we present children with important life skills that empower them to help protect themselves and encourages them to respect themselves and others.

Here are the key ideas that are presented to the children:

- An appreciation of God's goodness and personal love for them
- The need to respect all people and all forms of life

- A sense of self-worth.
- A spirit of prayer and sense of God's presence
- A sense that God loves all individuals and gives us families composed of members who help each other
- An understanding that God calls us to forgive those who hurt us
- A proper respect for the body as part of God's creation
- Understanding that their bodies should be respected
- Understanding that feelings can be managed
- How friends treat each other with respect
- Ways to report to trusted adults' uncomfortable situations or relationships with others
- The difference between "good" touch and "bad" touch
- A sense that individuals are loved by important people in their lives
- There are "good" choices and "bad" choices
- It is alright to say "no" to someone if you know what they are asking is wrong
- How to say I'm sorry
- How to experience forgiveness
- There should be no secrets, and recognizes the importance of letting trusted adults know about uncomfortable situations or relationships with others until believed
- The difference between safe and harmful relationships
- Families love and care for each other
- The uniqueness of each person
- When an adult makes a mistake, it is not a child's fault

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

TUITION POLICY

Tuition is based on a **yearly** rate but divided into a Payment Plan of ten equal payments for the convenience of parents. Tuition may be paid monthly, quarterly, or yearly. **It is due regardless of absence due to illness, vacation, travel, or holidays.** The first tuition payment for the upcoming school year is due on May 1. The remaining payments are due on the 1st of each month from August through April.

Payments can be made by cash, or a check made out to St. Paul Catholic Preschool. Please include your child's full name in the memo portion of the check. You may also set up automatic payments from your bank account or pay by credit card through Online Giving located on our website (on the "About Us" page). Please note that we do not provide yearly statements for income tax purposes. It is the family's responsibility to maintain tax records.

The school reserves the right to charge a late fee of \$25.00 for tuition not paid by the 10th of each month. If tuition is in arrears after one month, the student may be placed on financial suspension. Parents should contact the Director if hardship occurs.

All tuition and fees must be current to register for school for the following year.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM

If parents find a need to withdraw their child while the school year is in session, please contact the Director to discuss your change of plans. To assist families to remain enrolled, we are willing to accommodate an alternative payment schedule if finances become an issue during the school year. A two-week written notice is required if the child is withdrawn from the program for any reason.

PROGRAMMING

CURRICULUM

St. Paul Catholic Preschool uses developmentally appropriate practices in its curriculum design. Research indicates that young children learn best through the active manipulation of their environment, exposure to concrete experiences, and active involvement in the learning process. These hands-on experiences contribute to concept development.

St. Paul Catholic Preschool utilizes the following curriculum resources to reach our goals for the program:

- Religion Series: “Discovering God’s World” by Sadlier Publishing
- Diocesan Standards and Benchmarks
- Florida Early Learning & Development Standards
- NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Early Childhood
- Creative Curriculum
- Age-Appropriate Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS or ECERS)
- Safe Environment Standards

ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING

During the early years of a child’s life, many foundational skills essential for future success in school and beyond are developed. At St. Paul Catholic Preschool, we believe it is vital to closely monitor each child's growth and development. This allows us to identify any potential delays early on, when intervention can be most effective. With timely support, many children can overcome delays and thrive alongside their peers.

When a child exhibits persistent, challenging behavior, teachers, families, and other professionals collaborate as a team to create and implement an individualized plan that promotes the child's inclusion and success. If concerns arise regarding a child’s development or behavior, tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaires and/or the Sensory Profile can help determine whether a referral to an outside agency is appropriate.

When appropriate, children may be referred to the Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS)/Child Find of Hillsborough County, which offers free monthly developmental screenings. These screenings assess areas such as speech, hearing, vision, behavior, developmental milestones, and language. The results help guide any classroom accommodations needed and determine whether further evaluation or support is necessary. The screening tools used are both reliable and valid, ensuring accurate and meaningful insights into each child’s development.

Assessment Training: The teaching staff of St. Paul Catholic Preschool has been trained through professional development and/or college coursework in assessment techniques, procedures, interpretation of results, conditions under which children will be assessed, as well as cultural diversity. As part of ongoing professional development, staff is required to be trained in the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ3), Florida’s Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy for VPK, and any other tool adopted by the preschool.

Assessment and Screening Procedure: Parents are asked to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ3) and the Social Emotional (ASQ-SE2) questionnaire and return to the child’s teacher within one week of beginning school. These tools provide teachers with information about the child’s interests and needs. All children are screened for developmental progress annually.

Children are also assessed through daily observations, specific assessment scenarios for the individual child and/or entire class, familial input, as well as Florida’s Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy for VPK for four-year olds. This is done to align the curriculum with the individual child’s needs.

Conditions: The assessments are conducted by the children's familiar classroom teachers and/or preschool administrators making observations and assessments of the children's development in their natural environment, i.e., through daily activities and projects, interactions with their classmates both in the natural classroom and playground environment. The VPK FAST Star Early Literacy assessment tool is administered to the child on an iPad three times a year.

Timelines: Families are provided information, either verbally or in writing, about their child's development and learning throughout the year. Formal conference days are offered twice a year, but parents may request a conference anytime as the need arises or if they have a concern. A written report is given to families at these conferences. St. Paul Catholic Preschool will work with parents to meet the child's individual or special needs and make referrals to community resources if appropriate.

At St. Paul Catholic Preschool, the following assessment tools are used.

(For further information please visit the websites listed)

- Student Information Form completed by parent at the start of the school year
- Classroom Observations completed by teachers
- Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) using Star Early Literacy for VPK Assessment Tool, for four-year old's, completed by students on tablets in the classroom (parents will receive results)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire and Social Emotional Developmental Screening (ASQ3 and ASQ-SE2), completed by parents within the first 30 days of school <http://agesandstages.com>
- Florida Diagnostic Learning and Resources System (FDLRS)/Child Find (as needed)

Purpose: Assessments guide curriculum development and helps to adapt teaching practices, and the classroom environment to meet individualized instruction.

Uses of the results:

- Identify a child's interests and needs
- Identify the developmental progress and learning style of each child
- Improve the curriculum and adapt teaching practices and the teaching environment
- Determine if a more thorough developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment is needed
- Assist in planning and communication with parents
- Provide a mechanism for school-wide improvement

If parents have questions or concerns or would like to view the assessment instruments, they are encouraged to make an appointment with their child's teacher.

Planning Program Improvement:

The administrative team of the preschool evaluate Assessments annually by reviewing assessment results and the annual Readiness Rate given by the State of Florida to providers participating in the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program. Overall program improvements that can result from child assessments include: improved curriculum, enhanced instructional practices, targeted professional development for teaching staff and adjusted distribution of program resources.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We regard confidentiality to be an important aspect in respecting individual's and families' rights. Knowledge acquired in any manner pertaining to staff, each child, and their family is treated confidentially. To that end,

within St. Paul Catholic Preschool, information is shared on a strictly “need-to-know” basis. That is, information will not be shared unless it is to serve in the best interest of the child.

Within St. Paul Catholic Preschool, the staff members who will have routine access to screening and assessment results, medical records, and familial information will be the child’s classroom teachers, the Director, and the Assistant Director. Child and family information is stored in locked files which are housed in locked rooms at the end of the day.

Information will not be released to any third party or outside agency without the written consent of the parent, except for mandated reporting or to answer a subpoena. The consent form, Consent to Exchange Confidential Information, will state who the information will be shared with, what information will be shared, and the purpose for sharing the information. Additionally, children who are differently abled or who exhibit behaviors that appear inappropriate may be observed. Our confidentiality policy protects every child’s privacy. Staff members are prohibited from discussing anything about another child with others.

An exception to this policy would be children with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutritional needs. The Medical Alert Information Form and Authorization for Medication Form will be completed by the parent and physician and the information, along with a photograph of the child, will be posted in the classroom to serve as a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day.

The school shares rosters of classes with the room parent for each class. We do this so that parents can help plan class parties and other school activities. These lists include the child’s name, parent names and primary email address. Home addresses and home/cell phone numbers are not included. If you **do not** wish for your name and email address to be distributed among your child’s class, please call the office to inform us prior to the first day of school.

Reproductions of the children’s images or voices are not released to the media (website, radio, television, newspapers, other print media etc.) without parental signatures and consent on acknowledgement form at the end of this document. **To respect and protect the privacy of our families, photographs of children taken by parents during school activities are forbidden to be posted on the internet by other parents.**

CONTINUITY OF CARE

Once children are enrolled, the preschool’s policy is to minimize the transitions children are required to make throughout the school year. It is our policy to keep children with the same teaching staff for the entire ten-month school year. However, there are times when such transitions are necessary and a plan to support continuity of care will be implemented. If it becomes necessary for a child to change classrooms and teachers, every attempt will be made to ease the transition by cooperation among teachers and parents. If possible, classroom visits prior to the change will be scheduled.

Throughout the school year, teachers plan activities that combine the two, three and four-year olds so that the younger children become familiar with the next level classrooms and teachers. In the spring, three-year-old teachers plan visits to four-year-old classrooms so that children will become familiar with the new classrooms they may be assigned the following school year.

The preschool will send home information about neighborhood schools and encourages parents to attend Open Houses from Diocesan or public schools with kindergartens.

PROGRAM-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT (PWPBS)

Our school partners with the Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PWPBS) initiative, funded by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County through the University of South Florida (USF). The goal of PWPBS is to create a positive, supportive environment where every child feels safe, valued, and excited to learn.

PWPBS focuses on building strong social-emotional skills in young children, using a proven framework called the *Pyramid Model*. This model helps teachers create nurturing relationships, supportive classroom environments, and provide targeted social-emotional skill instruction to help all children thrive—especially those who may need extra support with behavior.

Family involvement is a key part of the PWPBS approach. When families use the same strategies and language at home that are used in the classroom, it helps reinforce positive behaviors and supports children's growth across settings. We encourage open communication and collaboration between home and school to give children the consistent support they need to succeed socially and emotionally.

By participating in PWPBS, our staff receive ongoing training and resources to strengthen relationships with children and families, promote positive behavior, and support healthy social-emotional development in every child.

At the beginning of the school year, families will receive a media release form provided by the University of South Florida (USF). This release grants permission to the PWPBS (Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support) coaching staff to capture photographs, audio recordings, or video footage of children during classroom activities.

These images and recordings may be used to create classroom visuals or as part of future PWPBS training materials.

Participation is completely voluntary. Families who do not wish to have their child included in any media may choose to opt out by indicating their preference on the release form.

CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are very important to children. We encourage you to bring a special snack to celebrate your child's birthday. We suggest mini cupcakes, cookies, or mini-donuts. Please check with your child's teacher at least a week before you send in a birthday treat. To ensure the safety of the children, we **do not allow balloons, streamers, party hats, goodie bags etc. to be brought to school.** Birthday Party invitations will only be distributed by the classroom teachers if there is an invitation for each child in the class. You may also distribute them after class.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

IMPORTANT SCHOOL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- To report your child's absence, call **Jen Waibel at (813) 264-3314** or send an email to jwaibel@stpaulchurch.com and your child's teacher by 9:00am
- For questions about tuition payments and volunteering, please call **Mindy Geer at (813) 264-3383**
- To contact the **Director or Teachers**, please call **(813) 264-3383**

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

If a language barrier prevents good communication, program staff will make every attempt to seek someone of the same culture who can translate the language and provide insight into cultural differences to promote good dialogue. If you speak another language and would like to volunteer your services as an interpreter to help other families, please call the office.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Volunteers greatly enhance our program, and we welcome your presence in our school! Many parents have special talents and gifts to share with our children. We encourage all parents to choose an area of interest that is suited to their talents and convenient to their schedule. Volunteer activities may include a variety of the following:

- Fall Fundraiser Committee
- Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser Committee
- Fall Festival
- Multicultural activities
- Serving as a language interpreter
- Classroom Helper
- Office help
- Demonstrating a particular talent to the children
- Teacher-directed activities and projects
- As well as other opportunities that arise

St. Paul has several activities planned throughout the school year. Please refer to the calendar and newsletters for further information.

Meeting other supportive parents is an important aspect of the preschool experience, and we wholeheartedly encourage you to do so! Both the Family Center/Parish Center courtyard and open-air Pavilion are great places to meet informally and talk with other parents. The playground, however, cannot be used by parents and siblings. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate play groups on the campus.

Please note that preschool classrooms are not “baby-proof.” For the safety of all children, it is recommended that parents volunteering in the classrooms make alternative arrangements for siblings by providing a babysitter to care for younger siblings at home.

Volunteers in a supervisory role of children must be background screened and take a Safe Environment Class in accordance with the policy of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis (10+ hours a month) will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks as required by licensing and diocesan regulations.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order.

COMMUNICATION

We realize the importance of good home/school communication. If you need to communicate with your child’s teacher, we ask that you call the office (813) 264-3383 or (813) 264-3314 or e-mail the teacher directly. Parents are always welcome to visit our early childhood program.

Please note: Prior approval from the Director is required before parents may send home any communication to the other families of the preschool.

INFORMATION BOARDS

The parent bulletin boards will be updated with current school information, activities, and daily snack menu. Please check these bulletin boards frequently for schedules, activities, snack menu, and sign-up sheets.

NEWSLETTERS

Teachers will send home a weekly newsletter with information specific to their classes. The newsletters will include some or all the following: an overview of the past week, information about lessons and skills, upcoming events, special announcements, classroom activities, other curriculum activities, as well as educational literature for parents. We encourage families to stay informed of activities and information through these communications.

PARENT MEETINGS

Parents are encouraged to attend Open House before applying and the Orientation meeting at the beginning of the school year. Both are designed to help parents become more familiar with St. Paul Catholic Preschool and to ease the transition into school, as well as communicate to families the program philosophy, educational goals, and strategies.

The Helping Our Toddlers, Developing Our Children's Skills (HOT DOCS) series is designed to assist families in promoting their child's learning and growth, including effective parenting strategies. The topics of discussion include proper nutrition, bedtime routines, physical growth and development, and activities to promote school readiness. They are provided by the University of South Florida.

Parent meetings such as open houses, volunteer committees for fundraising, educational workshops, as well as social gatherings, are scheduled throughout the year. The topics and formats of each event will be emailed to you, posted on the website, and through social media.

PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher communication is very important to a successful preschool experience. Always be sure to have current email and phone numbers on record. Your cooperation in this area is appreciated. Teachers will meet with parents twice a year for formal conferences. Additional conferences may be scheduled as requested by the teacher or parent.

PLAYGROUND

Student data information management system and instant alert for families.

INCIDENT REPORTS

In the event of an accident or unusual incident, such as changing clothes after a child spills, wets their clothes, or has a bathroom accident, parents will receive, in written form, an account of the event. The Department of Children and Families requires parent signatures on the accident/incident report to document that they were informed of the accident/incident.

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Please visit our website at <https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool>. The website is maintained and updated monthly. You can find us on Facebook at St. Paul Catholic Preschool Tampa and on Instagram at spcptampa.

“BACKPACK MAIL”

Children’s projects, special bulletins, permission slips, and various other information will be sent home in the children’s backpacks. Please remove such information each day. Children love to see their work displayed at home so please give it a place of honor.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, parents will receive calendars, flyers, and general information about various community activities available for families in our community. This information may also be posted on our parent bulletin boards.

ANNUAL SURVEYS

At least once a year, families and staff have opportunities to offer input and evaluate various aspects of our early childhood program through surveys. Each May, parents are asked to complete an Annual Program/Classroom Assessment. The input we receive from this important assessment tool is shared with families and staff and used to make improvements to our program. Your input is crucial to the betterment of our program as we rely on your honest recommendations, suggestions, and comments so that we can continue to provide a quality early childhood program to our families.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Parent-School communication and involvement are very important at St. Paul Catholic Preschool. Please feel free to contact the preschool office to discuss any concerns or ideas that you may have. Our policy encourages parents to relay their concerns to the person directly involved, whether that is a teacher, another parent, etc. If a concern continues to persist after that approach has been exhausted, the Director will meet with you to discuss your situation or your child’s welfare, as we seek to provide a supportive and community-building environment here at St. Paul Catholic Preschool. If the situation still cannot be resolved, the Director will schedule a special conference for all parties involved with the Pastor of St. Paul Church.

Director: Mindy Geer – 813-264-3383 – mgeer@stpaulchurch.com

Pastor: Fr. Craig Morley – 813-961-3023 – frmorley@stpaulchurch.com

HARASSMENT POLICY

St. Paul Catholic Preschool, Tampa, FL, strives to establish a Christian, professional, and supportive educational community for administrators, faculty and staff, parents, and children. The Diocese of St. Petersburg has adopted and promulgated a harassment policy for its schools that addresses behaviors that interfere with fulfilling the school’s mission. We, at St. Paul Catholic Preschool, condemn any form of harassment. Concerns should be reported immediately to the Director. All credible allegations will be addressed according to the Diocesan policy.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SUPERVISION

The staff of St. Paul Catholic Preschool are watchful of the children at all times, including supervision during class time and on the playground. Children are assigned to classrooms according to their ages and are supervised by a teacher and an assistant teacher, based on licensing requirements.

WALKING FIELD TRIP PERMISSION

As part of our licensing requirements with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), families are required to give permission for their children to participate in 'walking field trips'. This is necessary because not all buildings on our campus are licensed or monitored by DCF. We believe that hands-on experiences are essential for early childhood learning. To enhance our curriculum, we occasionally take walking field trips to the Church, Family Center, Santo Niño Shrine, Peace Path and the Rosary Garden; all of which are located on the church

campus. These trips provide valuable opportunities for children to explore their community and learn in a real-world setting. By initialing the Handbook Acknowledgement, you grant permission for your child to participate in supervised walking trips within the campus of St. Paul Catholic Church and Preschool. No additional permission slips will be required.

CHILD GUIDANCE POLICY

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, respectful, and inclusive learning environment where every child is treated with kindness, dignity, and respect. As a Catholic early childhood program, we strive to provide learning experiences in a loving Christian atmosphere while supporting each child's social-emotional development, self-regulation, and sense of belonging.

We have adopted the **Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PWPBS)** model, an evidence-based approach that teaches children the social-emotional and self-regulation skills they need to be successful. We believe that challenging behavior is a form of communication and that children learn best through positive relationships, consistent expectations, and intentional teaching.

Positive Guidance Practices

Our teachers support children's positive behavior by:

- Building nurturing, responsive relationships
- Creating predictable routines and engaging classroom environments
- Teaching classroom expectations and social-emotional skills
- Using positive descriptive feedback and encouragement
- Helping children learn problem-solving and self-regulation skills
- Responding calmly, consistently, and respectfully to challenging behavior
- Working to understand the underlying reasons for behavior

When challenging behavior occurs, staff first seek to understand why the behavior is happening and teach appropriate replacement skills rather than relying on punishment.

Prohibited Child Guidance Practices

St. Paul Catholic Preschool prohibits physical punishment and abusive or coercive disciplinary practices. Children will never be subjected to physical abuse, psychological abuse, coercion, intimidation, humiliation, or degrading treatment. Staff may never use threats, derogatory remarks, or withhold food, rest, toileting, affection, or other basic needs as a form of discipline.

Family Partnership

Families are important partners in supporting children's development and behavior.

If classroom strategies are not adequately meeting a child's needs, teachers will communicate with the family to discuss observations, share information, and work together to develop additional supports. When appropriate and with family participation, the preschool may recommend community or educational resources to assist the child and family.

Safety

If a child's behavior presents an immediate danger to the child or others, staff will take appropriate steps to maintain everyone's safety using the program's established safety procedures. Families will be notified whenever significant safety incidents occur.

Suspension, Expulsion, and Other Exclusionary Measures

St. Paul Catholic Preschool is committed to preventing suspensions, expulsions, and other exclusionary measures whenever possible.

Exclusion from the program is not used as a first response to challenging behavior. Before suspension, expulsion, or another exclusionary measure is considered, the preschool will:

- Assess the child's behavior and possible contributing factors
- Implement Positive Behavior Support strategies
- Collaborate with the child's family
- Develop and monitor individualized supports when appropriate
- Consider additional services or community resources that may benefit the child

Suspension, expulsion, or another exclusionary measure will be considered only in limited circumstances when:

- A child's consistent and prolonged disruptive or unsafe behavior presents a significant and ongoing safety risk; or
- After reasonable interventions and supports have been implemented, monitored, and adjusted, the program is unable to safely meet the child's needs within the program's available resources.

When exclusion becomes necessary, the Director will meet with the family to discuss the decision and will make reasonable efforts to assist the family in accessing appropriate community services and alternative placement options.

The Department of Children and Families requires that parents be notified in writing of the child guidance policy used by the childcare facility. The parent's signature or legal guardian's signature verifies that such persons have been notified in writing of the disciplinary practices of the childcare facility. Please acknowledge receipt of these procedures at the end of this handbook on the acknowledgement form.

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

Please have an alternative plan for taking care of your child when your child is sick, as ill children cannot attend school. Parents will be called to pick up their children if they are or become ill. If a child isn't feeling well at school, the staff will contact the family to come to the school for immediate pick up. Children who need to be separated from the group will be brought to the office to rest comfortably until the family member arrives. If a child is sent home from school for illness, they may not come back the next day to school. We observe the 24-hour rule: children must be fever, vomiting, and diarrhea free for 24 hours WITHOUT MEDICATION before they can return to school.

WHEN TO KEEP CHILDREN HOME

Please keep your child at home if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Inflammation or discharge from eyes
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or fever of 100.4 degrees or higher **without medicine** within the previous 24 hours
- Head lice
- Rash
- Green-colored, thick nasal discharge
- Communicable disease (flu, strep, chicken pox, COVID-19, etc.)

RESPIRATORY ILLNESS & RETURN-TO-SCHOOL POLICY

For illnesses such as COVID-19, flu, RSV, and other respiratory viruses, children may return to school once **both** of the following are true:

1. **Symptoms have been improving overall for at least 24 hours**
2. They have been **fever-free (below 100.4 °F / 38 °C) for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication**

Parents are asked to call or email the school by 9:00 AM when your child will be absent; call **(813) 264-3314** or email **jwaibel@stpaulchurch.com**. Please be sure to include the reason for the absence as we track incidences of infectious illnesses. If the level of communicable disease is unusual, the Diocese reports this information to the Health Department. Let us know if your child contracts a communicable disease. If children have been exposed to an unusual level or type of communicable disease, parents will be advised and given information on what steps should be taken for protection, such as signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures.

ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA

If your child has any allergies or severe asthma, it will be important for the school to be made aware. If children have food allergies, problem foods are to be avoided in school. Parents are encouraged to bring in food items that can be safely stored in the classroom for the child's specific use.

If it is deemed appropriate by a physician, it is the parent's responsibility to provide the school staff with an Epi Pen or inhaler along with the notarized Medical Alert Information Form and Authorization for Medication Plan, which is signed by the physician.

MEDICATIONS, SUNSCREEN AND INSECT REPELLANT

Except for life-threatening emergency situations such as allergies, diabetes, or asthma, medication is not administered at school. No other medications will be given to children. Please note, over-the-counter medicines, cough drops, vitamins, insect repellents, sunscreen, etc. are considered medications in this matter.

Children are taken to the playground daily so sunscreen (using UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher), as well as insect repellent, should be applied to the child's skin before leaving home. Life threatening medications, if needed, are not to be transported to school via the child's backpack. They must be transferred directly from parent/guardian to one of our school staff.

If a child has special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutritional needs, the child's health care provider must give the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care.

If a child has a life-threatening medical condition requiring emergency medications, parents must give their consent for the school to administer medication and have their physicians complete an **Authorization for Medication Form**. This form indicates the type of emergency medical condition, symptoms to observe, and specific actions to take if such an event were to take place, along with the appropriate emergency contact telephone numbers. The form must be signed by both the parent and the physician for our staff to administer medication.

Teachers are to protect children with food allergies from contact with the problem food. If children have food allergies, families are encouraged to bring in food items that can be safely stored in the classroom for the child's specific use.

The **Medical Alert Information Form** also asks families of children with special medical needs to give consent for visibly posting information about the child. When consent is given, the child's photo is posted along with the Authorization for Medication Form in all classrooms the child visits throughout the day. The child's photo and physician instructions are also attached to any medication. The medication for medical emergencies is kept in a closed fanny pack and is required to always be with the classroom teachers including daily time outside of the classroom.

If medication is administered, it is to be administered using the five right practices of medication administration:

1. Verify that the right child receives...
2. ...the right medication...
3. ...in the right dose
4. ...at the right time...
5. ...by the right method.

Teachers must complete the **Department of Children and Families Authorization for Medication** after each dosage, noting:

- Name of the child
- Name of the medication
- Amount of medication given
- Time and date
- Method
- Initialed by the staff person each time the medication is given.

Medications that must be brought to school are to be labeled with:

- The child's first and last name
- The date that either the prescription was filled, or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider
- The name of the licensed health care provider
- The expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication
- The manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.

Preschool staff have been trained in the use of Epi Pens and inhalers as part of our First Aid training. Additional training is provided as needed depending on the child's medical needs.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If an emergency, accident, or illness occurs, the following procedure will be followed:

Serious Injury:

- The school will call 911
- Call parents
- Call doctor (if parents cannot be reached)
- Call names on the emergency list

Illness at School:

- The school will call parents

- Then emergency contact numbers on the child's Medical Alert Information Form (if the parents cannot be reached)

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT TO INFORM THE SCHOOL IN WRITING OF ANY CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION.

ALL PHONE NUMBERS ON FILE NEED TO BE CURRENT.

Reminders -- Parents are responsible for:

- Providing the school with your child's up-to-date immunization and health records
- Knowing when to keep children home from school due to illness
- Calling the school by 9:00 am when your child will be absent. Call 813-264-3314 or email jwaibel@spaulchurch.com, please be sure to include the reason for the absence
- Informing the school if your child contracts a communicable disease
- Informing the school if your child has any allergies or severe asthma and providing an Epi Pen or inhaler, if appropriate, along with required paperwork
- Following the hand-washing policy while at school and reinforcing it at home
- Giving medications and applying sunscreen and insect repellent at home before leaving for school if necessary
- Keeping all parent contact information up to date with the preschool

NUTRITION

Snack time is an important part of your child's experience here at the preschool. A mid-morning snack is served daily (please see classroom schedule for regularly established time). Our curriculum includes:

- Thanking God for our food
- Teaching children about healthy food choices
- Good table manners
- Introducing children to a variety of foods, including those from different cultures
- Learning cooperation skills that come from cleaning up together

So that parents can be involved in their child's classroom activities, we are asking parents to take turns donating snacks for their child's classroom. Written menus are posted on the Parent Information Boards within each classroom. Copies are available to families upon request.

Because we are committed to providing a healthy learning environment and educating the whole child, we ask that parents follow appropriate nutritional guidelines for portions and healthy selections for preschool age children when preparing snacks and lunches, as well as meals at home. Our accreditation standards and licensing guidelines require that all meals served at the center (including those brought from home) meet USDA guidelines. If assistance is needed, the preschool staff will be happy to provide suggestions to you.

For additional information:

- Please visit the website: <https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-eating-preschoolers>
- See Snack Angel flyer attached or visit <https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool/resources/>

CHOKING HAZARDS

Children younger than four years of age should NOT be served the following foods:

- hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds)
- whole grapes

- nuts
- popcorn
- raw peas
- hard pretzels
- spoonful of peanut butter
- raw carrots
- meat larger than can be swallowed whole
- hard candy

Special Feeding Needs

Families of children with medically documented special feeding needs will receive documentation of the type and quantity of food the child consumes daily.

FOOD SAFETY

Any food treats brought to the preschool to be shared with other children must be store-bought, store-prepared, and/or in factory sealed containers. It is a health department regulation that no homemade food is served at the preschool. Some foods brought from home need to stay cold in **non-toxic** ice packs. These include the following:

- Meat and poultry sandwiches or salads
- Tuna and egg salads
- Milk, cheese, or yogurt
- Opened cans of fruit or pudding
- Peeled or cut fruits and vegetables

Some foods that don't need to be kept cold include crackers, commercially dried fruit, unopened cans of fruit or pudding, unopened juice boxes, and fruit-filled pastries.

All fruits and vegetables will be thoroughly washed prior to eating.

PEANUT AND NUT-SENSITIVE SCHOOL

Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to peanuts, nuts, and products containing peanuts in some children, **St. Paul Catholic Preschool prohibits peanuts, nuts, and or foods containing peanut products**. These peanut allergies can be so severe that exposure to peanuts can result in an anaphylactic reaction. An allergic child can have a reaction not only from consuming peanuts, nuts, or peanut products, but also from simply smelling peanuts on someone's breath or touching peanut oil residue left on a countertop. Parents are responsible for providing foods that are nut, and peanut-product-free for their own child's lunch and/or snack. We have included for your reference a list of acceptable food items that are peanut/nut product free.

Please see Snack Angel flyer attached and note that this is only a partial listing of foods. There are many acceptable food items that are peanut nut and peanut-product-free in stores. **The important thing to remember is to read the label of every food item you send to school with your child.**

HAND WASHING

All children, staff, and adults in the classrooms are required to wash their hands upon arrival at school. Children, staff, and parent volunteers will also be required to follow strict hand washing procedures throughout the day.

An educator from BayCare Kids visits St. Paul Catholic Preschool yearly to train staff and children in proper hand washing techniques. We ask that families monitor and assist children at home in the proper hand washing

techniques. Both children and adults (children, staff, volunteers, and visitors to school) are to follow the following hand washing schedule:

- Upon arrival for the day
- After toileting or having their diaper changed
- After handling body fluids (i.e., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit)
- Before and after snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after handling any raw food that requires cooking (i.e., meat, eggs, poultry)
- After playing in water that is shared by two or more people
- After handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals
- When visiting, that involves contact with infants and toddlers
- Any time hands become contaminated or soiled in any other way

Adults also wash their hands:

- Before and after feeding a child
- Before and after administering medication
- After assisting a child with toileting or diaper changing
- After handling garbage or cleaning

Proper hand-washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include:

- Using liquid soap and running water
- Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails
- Rinsing well
- Drying hands with a paper towel (a paper towel or a dryer)
- While avoiding touching the faucet with just-washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water)

SOILED CLOTHING

Families are required to provide a complete change of clothing, labeled with their child's name, to be kept at school the entire year. It is the family's responsibility to make sure a new set is sent in if the clothes are used due to any type of accident. When potty accidents occur for our 3-and 4-year-old students, teachers will help guide the child to use their self-help skills to clean themselves and change his/her clothing in the restroom. Our regulations require that the handling of clothing soiled with urine and feces be minimized as such, soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home to be laundered. We follow the Diocesan Safe Environment guidelines in these situations.

DRESS

Please dress the children in washable, comfortable play clothes which encourage the children's independence in dressing. For their safety we ask that they wear sneakers with socks or other soft-soled, closed shoes. We ask that there be no:

- Sandals or open-toed shoes
- Dangling jewelry or large, hoop earrings
- Valuable jewelry, bracelets, or necklaces
- Suspenders
- Scarves
- Clothing with drawstrings

Since children go outside to the playground or pavilion daily, weather permitting, we recommend layering clothing for warmth in cold weather. We suggest applying both insect repellent (containing DEET) and sunscreen using UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher at home before arriving at school.

Parents should come to the church and school campus appropriately dressed.

COLDER WEATHER DAYS

As weather becomes cooler, outer wear might be required. Please be sure to dress your child accordingly. The children will be going outside daily, even in colder weather.

BACKPACKS

Please send a regular sized backpack (**without wheels & fits our 9.5 x 12 in. Home/School communication folder**) with your child each day. The backpack should be labeled on the outside with your child's name. Please label all clothing, sweaters, jackets, lunch boxes, water bottles, and any "show and tell" items with your child's name.

PETS

Animals visiting the preschool must be in good health and must have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter that shows that the animal is fully immunized and suitable for contact with children. Parents are asked to contact the preschool office before planning to bring any animals to the school environment. Teachers will ensure that children interact with pets in appropriate ways. If your child is allergic or fearful of certain animals, please let your child's teacher know so that they can avoid a traumatic episode.

SMOKE AND VAPE-FREE FACILITY

It is unlawful in Florida for any person under 18 years of age to smoke tobacco or vape in, on, or within 1,000 feet of the real property comprising a public or private elementary, middle, or secondary school between the hours of 6 a.m. and midnight. This section does not apply to any person occupying a moving vehicle or within a private residence. This includes vape pens.

FIREARMS AND WEAPONS

In accordance with the law, no firearms or weapons as defined in Chapter 790.001, F.S., shall be allowed within any building or conveyance, or upon any person located on the premises, excluding federal, state, or local Law Enforcement Officers. Additionally, toys, games, or pictures depicting weapons or violence are strictly prohibited.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

INCLEMENT WEATHER

During hazardous weather conditions, the decision to close a Catholic school in the Diocese of St. Petersburg will rest with the Director, in consultation with the pastor, when necessary. The school will send out an alert with information using our Playground Instant Alert system.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

St. Paul Catholic Preschool has an emergency plan which is reviewed regularly. Drills for fire, tornado, lock downs, or missing child are practiced as a safety precaution. Should it become necessary in an emergency to evacuate the children from their classrooms when school is in session, they will be taken to the Parish Center or

Family Center to be reunited with their families. If the emergency requires that the property be evacuated entirely, the children will be taken across Stall Road to the Saucey restaurant.

In the case of such an emergency, we will contact parents and initiate a **controlled dismissal procedure**. **All parents and caretakers would be required to provide photo identification to pick their child up from the emergency location. There would be no car line and all parents/guardians would need to sign out their child showing photo identification.**

In case of an emergency affecting the Tampa Bay area, please listen to the local radio and television stations regarding the closing of school.

SNACK ANGEL INFORMATION

Dear Families,

Snack time is an important part of your child's experience here at preschool. Our curriculum includes thanking God for our food, teaching children about healthy food choices, good table manners, developing pouring and serving skills, introducing children to a variety of foods, including those from different cultures as well as cooperation that comes from cleaning up. So that parents can be involved in their child's classroom activities, we are asking parents to take turns donating snacks for their child's classroom.

The teachers coordinate the rotation cycle of snacks in their classrooms by setting up a "snack angel" calendar. On your assigned day/week, please donate a *store bought, prepackaged snack* for the entire class from two food groups.

Feel free to use your creativity. However, we cannot accept homemade items as the Health Department regulations require that we offer store-bought food only. It will be important to read labels on packages. Any pre-packaged fruit or vegetable must be labeled "pre-washed". Because many children have food allergies, please be conscientious about reading packaging labels carefully.

St. Paul is a nut-sensitive school, so peanut butter, or food containing nuts of any kind, are not permitted.

To make snack choices easier, we are including a list of suggestions. Please keep this information sheet and refer to the suggested snacks on the second page. Your child's teacher is available if you have any questions. Please visit the links below for additional information. You can access the links through the electronic version of this document found on the St. Paul Catholic Preschool website (<https://stpaulchurch.com/preschool/resources/>)

[Choosing Healthy Snacks for Kids - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[Building Balanced Snacks to Feed to Toddlers - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[Portions and Serving Sizes - HealthyChildren.org](#)

[Reducing Risk of Choking in Young Children.pdf](#)

By providing a relaxed, social atmosphere, counting our blessings, encouraging healthy food choices, good manners, and the fun of learning about new cultures, we hope that snack time will be an enjoyable experience for your children, staff and families alike. Please be an "angel" and adhere to these guidelines when it is your turn to provide snack for your child's class.

St. Paul Catholic Preschool Staff

Snack Angel Guide

This is a guide to help make it easier for you when planning snack for our class. Please check with your child's teacher for the number of children in the class. Water will be served with our snack. Please bring one gallon of bottled water in addition to your snacks for the week. To help give you some ideas when planning snack, you could choose one item from side A and one from side B. That will make a complete snack providing your child with at least two food groups. Feel free to use your imagination and help make this a great experience for your child.

Side A	Side B
Whole grain chips	Applesauce
Cereal bars	Peach cups
Saltines	Apple slices
Whole grain, low sugar cereal	Yogurt cups
Mini bagels	Cream cheese
Scoop chips	Salsa
Whole grain muffins	Strawberries
Graham crackers	Milk
Cheese crackers	Bananas
Veggie straws or chips	Watermelon
Rice cakes	Clementine oranges
Graham crackers	Pudding cups
Plantain chips	Pears
Sweet potato chips	Craisins
Animal crackers	Cheese sticks or slices
Pita chips	Edamame
Whole grain tortillas	Steamed veggies and hummus (Carrots need to be cut lengthwise to eliminate circle shape)
Whole grain English muffins	Dehydrated fruit
	Grapes
Nut free rice crackers	Fresh spinach leaves and ranch
	Hummus
	Sunflower seed butter (in place of peanut butter)
	Any fruit

Please remember that we are a nut-sensitive environment. To help protect our friends with nut allergies, food that contains nuts of any kind are not allowed.

Snacks to Avoid: Please avoid packing snacks that pose choking risks for preschoolers - especially foods like whole grapes, popcorn, raw vegetables, and nuts. Always cut snacks into small (about ½-inch) pieces or grate/mash appropriately to lower the risk.

FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT - 2026-2027

I/we acknowledge that I/we have received the St. Paul Catholic Preschool Family Handbook, which includes the following items. Please initial each item.

- _____(Initial) **Assessment Plan and Procedure** (p. 14)
- _____(Initial) **Tuition Policy** (p. 13)
- _____(Initial) **Child Guidance Policy** (p. 21)
- _____(Initial) **Walking Field Trip Permission** (p. 20)
- _____(Initial) **Promotional/Media Release** (p. 112):
- I/we ☐ **CONSENT** or ☐ **OBJECT** (check one) to the use of the name, portrait, voice or other likeness of my child for news releases, media, website, and promotional activities by St. Paul Catholic Church and Preschool or the Diocese of St. Petersburg. This consent/objection is subject to renewal at the beginning of each school year
- _____(Initial) **Know Your Child Care Facility Brochure** (available on website)
- _____(Initial) **DCF Influenza Brochure** (available on website)
- _____(Initial) **Distracted Driver Form** (available on website)
- _____(Initial) **A Code of Conduct** for Parents, Guardians, Caregivers, Volunteers, and Visitors of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg (available on website)
- _____(Initial) My child may participate in snack and other special food activities

In addition, I/we have read and agree to follow all the policies and procedures contained in this Family Handbook.

SIGNATURES REQUIRED: BOTH PARENTS AND/OR GUARDIANS

Parent Signature

Parent Signature

Parent Name (print)

Parent Name (print)

Date

Child's Name (print)

Please return this form to the school office no later than one week after your child enters our program.