

## Welcome to St. Mark's Preschool –Parent's Policy Handbook–

We are excited for your child and your family to be a part of our St. Mark's family. This handbook has been prepared to introduce you to our program, its policies and procedures. We are thrilled that we get to be a part of your child's academic journey!

### **Mission Statement:**

Saint Mark's Preschool is a ministry of the Church of St. Mark. As such, we seek to work in partnership with the families to fulfill the mission of the parish "to live and share Christ's call to holiness", inspire lifelong learners, and prepare them to be successful in our global community.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

- ❖ Provide learning opportunities that facilitate the development of the whole child (social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual) in a Christian environment.
- ❖ Help children prepare for kindergarten by focusing on their unique interests, abilities, and needs.
- ❖ Provide an environment that is stimulating, educational, caring, clean, healthy, and fun.
- ❖ Establish supportive relationships with parents, guardians, and families.
- ❖ Develop problem-solving skills that will aid them in learning how to resolve conflict peacefully
- ❖ Be creative, innovative, and a leader in the delivery of early childhood education.
- ❖ Create a setting that is inclusive and fosters diversity.
- ❖ Cultivate each child's innate desire to learn. Children will be encouraged and guided through a variety of play experiences designed to foster self-discovery and build confidence.
- ❖ Provide an affordable preschool
- ❖ Provide intentional early education opportunities for children. Work cooperatively with the community to serve children and their families.
- ❖ Develop and maintain a qualified and nurturing staff
- ❖ Maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and practices.

### **Program Philosophy:**

St. Mark's Preschool learning environment will reflect a Christian-centered focus to help model and teach about God's love and goodness. It is our goal to provide a variety of experiences and opportunities for the social/emotional, cognitive, physical, linguistic, and spiritual development of St. Mark's Preschool children. Through learning activities and play, each child will be

encouraged to grow at his/her pace. Children will be encouraged to imagine, explore, invent, create, interact, and express ideas and feelings.

### **About Us:**

St. Mark's Preschool Program is a Christian, non-profit community preschool for all pre-school age children regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national, or ethnic origin.

St. Mark's Preschool is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (651-431-6500). We are licensed to serve 70 children. We offer half-day and full-day preschool, as well as before and after school child-care. Our Staff is composed of 7 teachers and a director. We maintain a 10:1 ratio in each of our classrooms.

### **School Hours:**

#### **Fall Hours:**

Early Drop Off: 7:00 am - 8:25 am

Half Day Preschool: 8:30 am -11:30 am

Lunch: 11:30 am -12:15 pm

Full Day Preschool: 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Extended Day: 2:30 pm - 6:00 pm

#### **Summer Hours:**

Early Drop Off: 7:30am - 8:30 am

Preschool Program: 8:30 am - 11:30 am

Lunch: 11:30 am

Afternoon Summer Program: 12:15 - 5:00pm

St. Mark's Preschool Program enrolls children 33 months to 5 years old who must be toilet trained.

### **Registration and Tuition:**

- ❖ Registration materials are available on TADS  
<https://mytads.com/a/markerspride>
- ❖ A non-refundable registration fee of \$100 will be charged during the admission process. This fee does not apply toward tuition. When a class is full, a child's name will be placed on a waiting list for that class.

### **Forms Required for Enrollment:**

All forms, including medical forms, MUST be filled out and signed by a parent/guardian before your child begins school. The forms can be found on our website under "Parent Resources" or in hard copy upon request.

<https://www.onestrongfamily.org/preschool>

**Emergency Form:**

A parent/legal guardian will be asked to sign an emergency form which entails your child's emergency medical and dental care providers, persons to contact in case of emergency, and medical/dental insurance information.

**Immunization Records:**

Current immunization records are due on or before the first day of class. This record must give dates (month, day, and year) of immunizations your child has received. Immunization records must be updated whenever your child receives additional immunizations.

**Healthcare Summary Records:**

This form is due on or before the first day of class and must be signed by the child's source of healthcare. This information must include the date of the child's most recent physical examination.

**Media and Other Permission Forms:**

These forms give us permission to have your child's picture taken for our school internet use and promotions, permission regarding pick up of your child, permission to share information with your child's school district of residence regarding his/her development, and permission for your child's health records to be reviewed by our staff and/or nurse consultant. **Please notify the Director of any changes to these forms during the school year.** Written parental permission will be required before field trips. All forms are kept in a child's file and will be confidential. Only preschool staff and legal parents/guardians will have access to a child's file.

**Authorizations:**

When you register your child for preschool, please name all persons authorized to pick up your child and anyone who is not allowed to pick up your child. For us to legally stop a non-custodial parent from taking a child, a copy of the court order must be given to the Director to be put in the child's file and to inform school staff. You must inform the staff in advance and in writing if someone other than a parent or guardian is to pick up your child. Preschool staff will ask for ID from the person picking up the student.

### **Confidentiality:**

St. Mark's Preschool's work with children and families will sometimes bring preschool staff into contact with confidential information. We will respect the privacy of children and their families while ensuring that they have a high-quality early childhood experience in our setting. Our goal is to ensure that all parents/guardians feel comfortable sharing information that will enhance their child's experience at school. There are record-keeping systems in place to maintain confidentiality.

- ❖ Parents/Guardians will only have access to the files and records of their children upon request and in compliance with Minnesota state statutes.
- ❖ Staff will not discuss individual children with people other than the parents/guardians, except for curriculum planning or classroom management. Written permission from the parent/guardian is required if they wish the staff to discuss their child with others (i.e., grandparent, nanny, etc.).
- ❖ Information relating to staff employment will remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.
- ❖ Any concerns or evidence relating to a child's safety will be kept in a confidential file and will be shared with the child's teachers and the director. If necessary will be shared with the Human Resources manager as well.
- ❖ All visitors to the preschool are made aware of our confidentiality policy and are required to respect it.

### **Arrival and Departure:**

Parents are asked to drop off and walk their child to the preschool door and ring the bell. Parents will drop off in the entryway to the building. Teachers will mark the student in and walk them back to their classroom to put away their things. Children will then use the bathroom and wash their hands before beginning their preschool day. Children attending our half day program are welcome to stay for lunch at 11:30 and pick up time is between 12:00 pm and 12:15 p.m. Full time students' parents, please ring the bell in the afternoon and come in the building to pick your child up. **We understand that things come up and your student may need to come late due to something out of the ordinary. Please let your child's teacher know if they will be late. We do not allow children to come to Preschool after 11 am and stay for the rest of the day. This throws off the child and the rest of the class**

### **Preschool Calendar and Snow/Cold Days:**

Our preschool calendar will closely coincide with the SPPS calendar. If there is a closure of school due to inclement weather with SPPS, our preschool will also be closed. Parents will be notified as well by email and/or text. If SPPS does not close and it is determined that the weather is too inclement, the preschool director will make the final decision as to closing the preschool due to weather.

**Preschool Celebrations:**

The children will celebrate Halloween, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter through special events planned by the teachers and director. Parent volunteers and donations may be asked of families. Our Fall Family Fun Night is a great time for families to get together and meet one another. Other family activities may be planned during the school year.

**Preschool Fire Drills, Emergency Drills, Tornado Drills:**

Monthly fire and emergency drills will be conducted while preschool is in session. A tornado drill will be practiced from April to September.

**Daily Schedule:**

A daily schedule will be available at the beginning of the school year. These schedules create a sense of order, while still allowing for modifications and leeway to meet the needs of the students and to allow for flexibility. Schedules allow for our students to know what to do, what is coming next, and what is expected of them.

We understand how important it is that children have time outside throughout each day. Weather permitting, we strive to go outside at least once per day. If due to inclement weather, including but not limited to rain or temperature below 10 degrees, we are unable to go outside, alternate activities will be provided in the gyms or classrooms. All schedules are subject to change.

**Curriculum:**

Our teachers work judiciously to create child-centered play choices that allow our students to learn through exploration and interaction with adults, other children, and a variety of materials. Children are able to choose from a collection of developmentally appropriate activity centers that are spread through the classrooms that encourage imagination, exploration, creativity, various interactions, and the ability to express their ideas and emotions in healthy ways. Teachers work with the children individually, in small group settings, and sit back and observe the children at play. This allows each student to learn at his/her own pace, giving each student the opportunity to learn and grow in our loving and safe environment. Each day large motor activities are offered through outside play or in one of our gyms. The *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* provides a structured guideline for learning, but also allows for unplanned and spontaneous learning experiences. This curriculum is designed to account for individual differences, including interests, learning styles, life experiences, temperament, culture, special needs, and English language learners. There are also multicultural concepts and activities. We believe that a child's work is play. Through our curriculum we meet these goals in a variety of ways:

- ❖ **Emotional**—Each child will be allowed to feel loved, special, and comfortable in their classroom setting (birthdays, special jobs, daily jobs).
- ❖ **Intellectual**—Children are encouraged to have an enthusiasm for learning, creating, and exploring through hands-on activities (games, puzzles, books, art projects, blocks, circle time, music, math manipulatives, science projects, etc.)
- ❖ **Physical**—Through active experience, children will develop large and small muscle coordination and motor skills (playground, dance, music, parachute play, coloring, handwriting, sensory table, etc.)
- ❖ **Social**—Groups—this is the participation and work on getting along with others to develop a sense of belonging, community, and security (sharing, active listening, teacher modeling, storytelling, etc.)
- ❖ **Spiritual**—Through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, prayer, Bible stories, awareness of Christ's love will be nurtured (Christian teachers modeling God's love and having an education in a Christian environment)

### **Assessment:**

As stated above we use *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* this a blueprint for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. This curriculum is based on child development research. We use this curriculum and teacher knowledge to create assessments that go with your child through their entire time at St. Mark's Preschool. Assessments are based on observation, children's work, and evaluation of collected facts. All assessments are confidential and will only be shared with parents and/or legal guardians.

### **Outdoor Play Policy:**

Outside recreation is an essential part of our program. Please send your child dressed appropriately for Minnesota weather, keeping in mind mornings are usually cooler than the afternoons. Layering is always a great idea. In the winter please make sure your child has a hat, mittens, coat, snow pants, and boots all labeled. We try to get outdoors each day, weather pending the director and teacher discretion with colder temperatures and air pollution. There are also 2 gyms available as an alternative.

If there is a heat, weather, or smog advisory, children will be kept indoors. Sunscreen or bug spray may be brought to school and applied by staff only with written permission. Please ask the director or a teacher for this form. Parents are welcome to apply sunscreen or bug spray before their child arrives at school.

Children are required to wear closed toed shoes at all times. This is a DHS requirement for the safety of the child.

### **Snack Time:**

Children will be provided with snacks daily. Our half day students will have a morning snack. Our full day students will have a morning snack and a snack after rest time is finished. Each child is welcome to bring a birthday snack on their birthday. If you choose to do this the treat needs to be commercially prepared and packaged. Please ask your child's teacher about classroom/school allergies. If your child is a full day student please provide a cold lunch for your child, our half day children are welcome to stay and bring a cold lunch as well. During snack times and lunch time, your child will be provided with milk and/or water from the preschool.

### **Code of Conduct:**

At St. Mark's Preschool we value each and every child and every family that chooses to enter our doors. We want everyone to know they are loved, respected, safe, and valued. Parents and teachers are needed and expected to model respectful and loving behavior to children and their peers. We believe our students can successfully live out the following behaviors at preschool and everywhere else they go:

- ❖ **Respect Others:**
  - Treat others as you would like to be treated
  - Share
  - Cooperate
  - Include Others
  - Be Honest
  - Help out when asked
- ❖ **Follow Directions:**
  - Keep a positive attitude
  - Show respect for all adults
- ❖ **Respect Personal Space:**
  - Keep hands, feet, and all other objects to yourself. This includes biting, hitting, pushing, spitting, etc. of another person.
- ❖ **Stay in Assigned Areas:**
  - Do not leave the classroom without a teacher
  - Stay with your teacher and classmates outdoors
  - Ask permission to use the bathroom
- ❖ **Use Appropriate Language:**
  - Name calling and teasing are not allowed
  - Speak respectfully to all adults and children
- ❖ **Use Equipment Properly:**
  - Ask before using other people's belongings and classroom materials
  - Toys may not be used to harm others or yourself
  - Put equipment and materials back where they belong
  - Take care of all toys and materials

### **Behavior Guidance:**

These behaviors are incorporated in our classroom rules, which are necessary to provide a positive learning environment for all children. All classroom rules will be discussed with the children and modeled by the teachers. These guidelines are tailored to the developmental level of the preschool child. When behavior is unacceptable, the following guidelines will be followed:

- ❖ The child will be reminded of what is expected
- ❖ The child will be taught how to use their words and other ways of problem solving
- ❖ The child will be redirected to another place in the room
- ❖ If the problem persists parents will be contacted
- ❖ Child will be taken out of the room and spend time with the Director
- ❖ If the behavior continues, a meeting between the parents/guardians, teacher and director will be arranged to establish a behavior plan for the child.
- ❖ If the behavior continues, parents will be notified that moving forward anytime the unacceptable behavior occurs, parents will be called to come pick up the child. Parents and the school will be in consistent communication and after 3 times of the child being sent home for unacceptable behavior the child will then be asked to leave the school
- ❖ Unacceptable behaviors include, but are not limited to: biting other children, hitting other children, pushing other children, spitting/other bodily fluids on others, taunting children, yelling, and name calling..

### **Special Needs:**

Parents/Legal guardians have the responsibility to inform the preschool when their child has any special medical conditions, dietary restrictions, special needs, or allergies so that we can work with the parents to provide appropriate care and support.

If your child has an ISP (Individual Service Plan) and/or IEP (Individual Educational Plan) it needs to be shared with the classroom teacher and the director. In addition, state licensing regulations require us to develop an ICCP (Individualized Child Care Plan) with you that will assist us to meet your child's needs. The ICCP must be signed by you and your child's licensed healthcare provider as listed above and be reviewed annually to assure that necessary modifications are made to the plan of care.

### **Special Needs Services:**

Special Education services may include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, or any specific services that a child might need. If we suspect that your child needs special education services, we will speak with you about our concerns and work with you and our school district, or your medical team throughout the process of interventions and assessments.



St. Mark's Preschool will make every effort to meet the needs of all children enrolled in our program. If the special need requires that our staff be trained to perform a new skill, you will be asked to arrange for this training. Although we try our best to meet the needs of every child, St Mark's Staff may not be able to meet the needs of every child that comes through our doors.

### **Parent Involvement:**

Parents and families are essential for a positive early childhood experience. Parents are welcome at the preschool. If you would like to come into the preschool, you need to make an appointment with your classroom teacher. Parents are asked to volunteer for field trips and help with various programs throughout the year with labor or donation of items. We welcome ideas and suggestions when it comes to your child of how we can best reach them for academic success

### **Family and Staff Communication:**

Communication between parents and preschool staff members is important and may include monthly newsletters, face-to-face communication, conferences, flyers, notes, phone calls, and emails. Parents are provided developmental and academic information about their child verbally several times throughout the year. If you ever have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or the director.

### **Volunteers:**

Volunteering is an integral part of who we are at St. Mark's Preschool and a wonderful way to live life. The benefits one gains from working side-by-side in the community last a lifetime. Parents, grandparents, guardians, etc. are encouraged to volunteer in various ways (field trips, special events, have something to share with the class/school, etc.). We follow the Archdiocesan policy, which requires that all volunteers complete the basic background check, complete Virtus training, and sign our Code of Conduct. Background packets are available in the Parish Center or ask the director. Once all 3 items have been completed, you are eligible to volunteer.

### **Parental Grievance and Program Review:**

When a parent/guardian has a concern about an aspect of our preschool program, we will take every step to resolve the issue as promptly as possible. The safety and well-being of the children and the staff is a priority. If you have a concern please address it with the staff member first. If this conversation does not resolve the issue, or you do not feel comfortable speaking with the staff member, please bring it to the attention of the director. At St. Mark's Preschool, we want to see your child succeed and your family thrive. We welcome ways to serve your family.

Each year the director and staff review the Preschool Program and Policies to ensure our program is running to the best of our abilities. Parents may inquire about the preschool in person, by phone, email, or writing

### **Exclusion Guidelines for the Children and Staff:**

The Department of Human Services requires that we exclude a child with an illness or condition that the Commissioner of Health determines to be contagious and a physician determines has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the risk of the health of others. Preschool staff will perform a daily health screening to all children as they arrive. Please call the preschool or email your child's teacher if you know your child will not be attending class that day. Our school phone number is 651-644-5030. Our program follows the exclusion guidelines listed below, which have been taken from the Infectious Diseases in Child Care Settings: Information of Directors, Caregivers, and Parents or Guardians and School Health Staff, Sixth Edition, prepared by the Minnesota Health Department, Epidemiology Program. We must exclude a child with any of the following illnesses:

- ❖ **Fever** Unable to participate in routine activities or needs more care than can be provided by the preschool staff. With an elevation of body temperature above normal when accompanied by behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, rash, sore throat, and/or other signs or symptoms of illness, or is unable to participate in routine activities. A child's temperature of 100.1 degrees or higher will have parents notified, and be sent home until fever free for 24 hours, without the use of medications.
- ❖ **Signs/Symptoms of Possible Severe Illness:** A healthcare provider needs to evaluate the child to rule out a severe illness when the child is unusually tired, has uncontrolled coughings, unexplained irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs for the child.
- ❖ **Diarrhea** : A child that has diarrhea 2 or more times in an hour, parents will be called to take the child home and the child must stay home the rest of the day or until the diarrhea has completely stopped. A healthcare provider can tell if the diarrhea is not due to a communicable disease. Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools that are watery, bloody, or contain mucus.
- ❖ **Vomiting:** A child that vomits once at school, parents will be notified to pick up their child and will need to stay home for 24 hours after they have stopped vomiting. As well, it is determined that the vomiting was not caused by a non-communicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- ❖ **Mouth Sores with Drooling:** Until a medical exam indicates the child may return to school or until the sores have healed.
- ❖ **Rash with Fever and Behavior Change:** Until a medical exam indicates these symptoms are not those of a communicable disease that requires exclusion.

- ❖ **Eye Drainage:** When purulent (pus) drainage and/or fever or eye pain is present, a medical exam will need to be performed to indicate when a child can return.
- ❖ **Unusual Color of Skin, Eyes, Stool, or Urine:** Until a medical exam indicates the child does not have Hepatitis A symptoms. Symptoms include: yellow eyes or skin, gray or white stools, or dark urine. When a child has been medically diagnosed with a communicable disease, we will notify the appropriate health authorities and follow their recommendations to provide information to all parents of exposed children. The preschool will notify parents within 24 hours by a written notice via email. Parents are required by State Law and our center policies to inform the preschool within 24 hours, exclusive of weekend/holidays if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease.

### **First Aid:**

In the event of injury or illness at school, appropriate first aid will be administered by trained staff. If a staff member decides this is an emergency, 911 will be contacted to provide emergency first aid. A parent or alternate listed on the Emergency Contact Form will be contacted as soon as possible. If necessary, the emergency medical staff will transport your child to a medical facility as designated by emergency services. An attempt to contact your child's source of health care may also be made. Staff will not transport children.

### **Care of Ill or Injured Children:**

If your child becomes ill or injured in our care, he/she will be isolated away from the other children under the supervision of a staff person. You or your designated alternate will be contacted to pick up your child immediately. Until your arrival, your child will be monitored and comfort measures will be provided according to program procedures. If staff determine necessary, the child's health care provider will be contacted.

### **Medications:**

Medications will not be administered by preschool staff. Expectations will be made for life-threatening illnesses.

*Preschool staff follow all guidelines outlined in St. Mark's Preschool Health and Safety Policies. For a copy, please contact the director*

**Potty-Trained Policy:**

Each child that enters our doors for Preschool must be fully potty trained, this includes both potty and BM's. We understand accidents can happen from time to time. A child that has had an accident needs to be able to change their clothes on their own after their accident. If your child is having 3 or more accidents a week for 3 weeks, we will contact the parents and have the child step out of our preschool program until they are fully potty trained.

**Clothing:**

Please dress your child in comfortable and appropriate clothing. Our students are moving around each day in a variety of activities that include art projects, outdoor play, and special activities in the classroom that can get messy. Make sure your child's clothing is easy to get on and off by themselves while using the restroom. Weather permitting, children will play outdoors each day. Children need to wear closed-toed shoes to school each day.

**Rest Time:**

Rest time is provided each day for quiet time and for the children to gather energy for the afternoon. Rest time is to be peaceful for all children. We understand that some children do not take naps anymore. Each child will be required to rest for 30 minutes on their cot. If they are not sleeping, they will be provided with something quiet to do on their cots so the other children that are sleeping can finish their nap. A blanket and a stuffed animal can be sent in with your child. These items must be able to fit in their cubby and need to be taken home on Fridays to be washed.

**Field Trips:**

St. Mark's Preschool offers a few field trips each year. When a field trip involves transportation away from our school, a permission slip will be sent home and a parental/guardian signature is required. The slip will explain the destination, mode of transportation, hours, and cost. The preschool will follow Minnesota transportation guidelines when transporting preschool-age children. Parent volunteers will be needed.

**Birthdays:**

We will celebrate each child's birthday during the school year in the child's class. Parents are welcome to bring in commercially prepared snacks. Cupcakes, cookies, fruit snacks, popsicles, etc. are some ideas of treats. You are welcome to contact your child's teacher or the Director for any questions.

**Late Policy:**

During the **School Year** our Preschool our hours are **7:00 am to 6:00 pm**

During the **Summer Session** our Preschool hours are **7:30 am to 5:00 pm**

We understand that life happens and you may be late. The first time a parent/guardian is late we understand. After the first time, a parent/guardian must pay **\$1 for each minute they are late**.

The fee will go to the Teacher that has stayed with the child of the late parent/guardian.

This late policy also includes half day students. Any child registered for our half day program must be picked up by 12:15 pm.

**Withdrawal from the Program:**

Each child is enrolled for the entire school year or the balance of the year. If permanent withdrawal from St. Mark's is necessary, a two-week notice is required. If you withdraw without notice, a two-week tuition charge will apply. Last month's tuition will **not** be refunded. No adjustments will be made to tuition for absence due to illness or vacation.

St. Mark's Preschool may terminate enrollment of a child for reasons of family non-compliance with the policies of the preschool. Additionally, the preschool may terminate enrollment if it is determined that the preschool is not reasonably able to meet the needs of a child. St. Mark's Preschool will be in communication with families in efforts to solve difficulties and termination of enrollment will be a last resort.

**Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect:**

Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect. All preschool staff members are mandated to report any suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect. All reports regarding suspected abuse or neglect of a child/children within the preschool program should be made to the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division's Maltreatment Intake Line 651-431-6600. Reports regarding incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect of children occurring within a family or in the community should be made to the local county services agency at 651-431-6600 or local law enforcement 651-266-9333.

Reports regarding violations of Minnesota Statutes or Rules that govern the preschool program should be communicated to the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division at 651-431-6600.

# **Saint Mark's Preschool Parent Handbook Acknowledgement**

**Parent Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Name/s** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_