



St. Mark's Episcopal Preschool
Parent Handbook
&
Operational Policies
2020-2021

"May we teach them to love whatever is just, true and good."

Episcopal Book of Common Prayer

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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I. GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD

The St. Mark’s Preschool Board and the parish of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, warmly welcome each of you into the fold of our preschool family. We are happy you have joined us and we look forward to working hand-in-hand with you during the time that your child is with us. Believing that a child learns best in an atmosphere of trust and security, we have created a child-centered environment and curriculum in which each child can feel comfortable to try new things and make new friends. Maria Montessori first said, “Play is a child’s work,” and we embrace that philosophy as we allow play to teach children much today while laying the foundation for learning that will come later in school. We believe our program encourages children to become comfortable in a group setting while also encouraging their own independence. Self-expression, creativity, responsibility and respect for others are nurtured, as are initiative and a joy for learning. We can think of no better way to broaden the spectrum of a child’s world than through meaningful experiences shared with peers and responsive, caring adults. And while the safety of children is always the “umbrella” under which everything else is

considered, we believe children need opportunities to try new things, push their own limits, and explore their worlds in an environment planned for just such exploration. We look forward to the time you are with us and consider you partners in the exciting adventure of helping your child develop into his/her fullest potential.

PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

St. Mark's Preschool is dedicated to providing a loving, Christian atmosphere for children, with time for activities that acknowledge God's love. The curriculum incorporates play-based learning and utilizes play as a teaching tool in all areas of education. We provide a warm and safe environment for the spiritual formation of children allowing them to learn and explore the world through play. Our main focus is on all areas of children's development...social, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

We operate as a ministry of St. Mark's Episcopal Church of San Marcos, Texas, in the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

The children participate in weekly chapel, led by the parish rector, as well as in daily songs and prayer before snack and during circle time.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

St. Mark's Preschool is a caring, diverse community, inclusive of all faiths and grounded in the Christian tradition, that nurtures the growth and development of the WHOLE child, valuing the potential and dignity of every human being.

SCHOOL-PARENT INTERACTION

St. Mark's encourages parents to visit as well as volunteer. You may stay as long as you wish at any time. We encourage communication between home and school and our classroom doors are always open. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns or suggestions with a staff member by direct contact, email or by phone message.

II. SCHOOL CALENDAR

The preschool will follow the San Marcos Consolidated School District calendar for the 2020-2021 school year. All SMCISD holidays, including inclement weather days and teacher in-service days, will be observed unless otherwise stated. Parents will be provided with a calendar at the start of the school year.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Hours of operation are from 8:00am to 3:00pm Monday through Friday for full-time students and 8:00am-12:00pm Monday through Thursday for part-time students.

- 8:00 a.m.** Meet and Greet – Centers: arts and crafts, puzzles, flannel board, math & manipulatives, library, letters, office, blocks, family life, games, science, free play
- 8:45 a.m.** Calendar and Circle Time
- 9:15 a.m.** Outside Learning
- 10:00 a.m.** Small Groups
Centers
Snack Rotation
- 11:00 a.m.** Clean Up and Closing Circle
- 11:15 a.m.** Outside Time
- 12:00 p.m.** School is out for part time students
Lunch for full time students
- 12:45 p.m.** Story Time / Nap
- 1:30 p.m.** Small Groups
- 2:00 p.m.** Outside Learning
- 3:00 p.m.** Dismissal

III. MEET THE STAFF

Our classroom staff consists of one Director/Teacher, one Co-Teacher and one Assistant Teacher. Classroom capacity is sixteen children. Interns from Texas State University assist us each fall and spring semester. These education majors are a welcome addition to our daily activities. They provide lively and informative lessons while interacting with the children.

We have qualified substitutes for the teachers and assistant. Parents interested in substituting may inquire with the director.

Our classroom staff and church staff are listed below:

Teresa Eells, Director/Teacher
Amy Cesta, Teacher
Liliana Perez, Assistant Teacher
The Reverend Ben H. Nelson III, Rector
The Reverend Mike Woods, Assistant Rector
Patty Polk, Parish Administrator
Jenny Henderson, Music Director
Amanda McCorkle, Motor and Movement

IV. LICENSING INFORMATION

State Child Care Licensing-San Marcos Office: (512) 753-2233
State Abuse Hotline (DFPS): 1-800-252-5400
Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing Website:
<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/safety/child-care>

OPERATIONAL POLICIES

V. REGISTRATION

A. Eligibility

1. Children who will be at least 3 years of age by September 1st of the current year will be eligible for enrollment.
2. Children who are 4 or 5 years of age will also be eligible for enrollment.
3. Exceptions may be made by the Executive Board as needed.
4. All children must be potty trained.
5. No child may be denied admission because of the child's gender, race, religion, national origin, ancestry or creed.

B. Application

Application forms are available year-round at the preschool. You may call the preschool to set up a time to visit and drop off your form. Once the application form is received, the child's name will be put on the waiting list and a classroom visit for the child may be scheduled.

C. Fees & Tuition

1. All fees and tuition shall be established by the Executive Board.
2. The registration fee is non-refundable.
3. The supply fee is \$100 per child that is collected two weeks prior to the announced school start date. This supply fee may be refunded if the child's application is canceled prior to the first day of school.
4. Tuition is due on the first day of the month (Sept.-May). There will be a \$10.00 late fee added to tuition checks paid after the 5th of the month and a \$25.00 charge on returned checks.
5. A prorated tuition amount may be due for partial school months.
6. In the event that a previous monthly installment is not paid, the child, as decided by the Executive Board, may not be allowed to return to school until the previous installments and current installments are paid.

D. Scholarship Information

When available, partial scholarships based on need are granted.

E. Withdrawing From School

1. There is a two-week trial period (starting with the child's first day of school) whereupon a family may withdraw their child and receive the following refund:
 - a) Partial reimbursement of the first month's tuition
 - b) A full refund of the supply fee
2. If a family wishes to withdraw their child after the trial period, 30 days written notice must be given.
3. Every attempt is made to help each child adjust and integrate successfully into the preschool environment. On rare occasions a child may be unable to adjust to the preschool environment. In these cases, the Executive Board will review the circumstances and determine if the child should withdraw from the preschool.

VI. HEALTH AND SAFETY

A. State Requirements-Medical

A medical information section is included in the registration form, and updated medical records must be on file by the first day of school. St. Mark's Episcopal Preschool follows state child-care licensing guidelines for immunizations. The preschool maintains the records, signed and completed by the child's physician.

The State of Texas requires:

1. Each child shall have a medical examination performed by a qualified physician within 12 months of admission to preschool, and annually thereafter.
2. Each child enrolled shall have a health record signed by a qualified physician, kept in the child's permanent folder, and available to representatives of the State and local Health Departments. The health record should have the following:
 - a) Any history of recent exposure to communicable disease.
 - b) A health statement that the child has been examined and has been found to be free of communicable disease.

- c) A copy of the hearing and vision screening if your child is 4 years of age or within 120 days of turning 4.
 - d) A current copy of your child's immunization records completed by a physician.
3. If your child is participating in the *delayed shot program*, a waiver is required to be on file for each inoculation that is not up to date. Your admission paperwork needs to include a note from your pediatrician that your child has approval for the delayed shot schedule.

B. Illness Policy

In order to ensure the health and well-being of your child and other children in the class, please keep your child at home if any of the following circumstances exist:

- 1. Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater;
- 2. Armpit temperature of 99.0 degrees or greater;
- 3. Symptoms and signs of possible illness, such as dry cough, shortness of breath, chills, sore throat, muscle aches, lethargy, diarrhea, vomited in the past 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, open skin sores with drainage, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be ill; or
- 4. A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

Should your child exhibit any of these symptoms during school hours, we will contact you and ask that you pick your child up within sixty (60) minutes. We will provide care and supervision of your child while separating them from the group to prevent them from infecting other children. Proper hand washing and sanitation procedures will be followed according to the Texas HHS "*Minimum Standards Rules for Licensed Child-Care Centers*".

If a child has been absent due to illness, he or she may not return to class until symptom *and* non-medicated fever free for at least 24 hours.

Parents will be notified if there has been a communicable disease diagnosed in the classroom.

C. **Emergency Medical Procedures**

During an emergency due to a major accident or illness of a child requiring medical attention and/or Emergency Medical Services (EMS), St. Mark's Episcopal preschool staff will:

1. Call 911 and provide pertinent information for EMS
2. Give First Aid/CPR as needed
3. Contact the physician identified in the child's school record
4. Contact child's parents utilizing the Communications Plan (Section VI. G.)
5. Teacher/Director will ensure direct supervision of other children in the group during the incident
6. Document and report to Texas Health and Human Services-Child Care Licensing Division
7. Report to the facility insurance company as required.

A copy of your family's medical insurance card must be on file by the first day of school.

D. **Medication Policy**

Sometimes it is necessary for a child to take medication at school. The following steps will be followed when requests to administer medications are made:

1. Parents must sign and complete a *Medication Authorization Form*.
2. Medication brought to preschool must be in its original container with the child's full name, date, and directions for administration, and will only be administered to the child to whom it is prescribed.
3. Medications should be given to a staff member for safe keeping.
4. Medications cannot be administered after the expiration date.
5. When administering medication, a staff member will document on the preschool's medication form the name of the child, the date, the time, the amount of medication given, their signature. See "*Minimum*

Standard Rules for Licensed Child-Care for Centers” for rules on storage, length of time to keep medication, proper disposal and return of medication to parents.

E. Incident Reports and Documentation

An incident or accident report will be filled out for a child as needed due to a minor or major injury. Parents will be required to sign the form which only acknowledges that they have been notified and are aware of the incident. Minor scrapes or bruises will be noted on the daily sign-out sheet. This will be initialed by the parents when their child is picked up.

F. Emergency Preparedness Plans

1. Fire Drills and Fire Evacuation

- a) Staff will activate an audible alarm and announce “fire drill”. The teacher will pick up the Emergency Information Folder and escort all children to the designated emergency exit door.
- b) Evacuation maps (posted in the classroom) will be utilized for evacuation routes.
- c) Staff will relocate the children to the church office building (“Rock House”) or the church Parish Hall. (Both located within the boundaries of the church property)
- d) All children will be accounted for by using the sign-in sheet.
- e) During an actual fire incident, the staff will call 911 after safely relocating all children.
- f) Staff will remain with the children until it is safe to return to the school building.
- g) After an actual fire incident, parents will be notified utilizing the Communications Plan. (Section VI. G.)

Fire drills, smoke detector inspections & fire extinguisher checks will be conducted monthly (Sept-May). Fire extinguishers are located near the front main classroom entrance. Documentation

of all drills, fire extinguisher and smoke detector checks are posted publicly in the classroom. Procedures are posted in the classroom along with a diagram clearly marking all emergency exits.

2. Evacuations (Other)

- a) In an emergency evacuation, the first responsibility is to quickly and safely move the children to the church office building or to the church Parish Hall.
- b) Evacuation maps (posted in the classroom) will be utilized for evacuation routes.
- c) All children will be accounted for using the sign in sheet. The Emergency Information Folder will be taken to the safe location by the teacher.

Once all children are accounted for, the teachers will call the local authorities pertinent to the specific emergency. Emergency numbers are located in the Emergency Information Folder. Notification of HHS-Child Care Licensing or the HHS Statewide Intake (1-800-252-5400) will be made within two (2) days of incident. Parents will be notified utilizing the Communication Plan.

3. Shelter-In-Place Plan

During a shelter-in-place incident, preschool staff will:

- a) Move children to the classroom building safe room (adult bathroom)
- b) Account for all children and adults using sign in sheet in front of Emergency Information Folder
- c) Close and securely lock all doors and windows to the outside
- d) Seal any vents and windows to the outside as needed
- e) Turn off all air and fans as needed
- f) Use disaster supply kit and/or first aid kit as needed
- g) Notify local emergency responders as needed
- h) Monitor with other church staff the incident status
- i) Keep children calm and engaged in activities
- j) When practical, notify all parents of the situation utilizing the Communication Plan.

4. Resumption of Normal Operations

- a) Church will be responsible for assessing and repairing damaged facilities, property or equipment as needed.
- b) The Preschool Director will be responsible for reporting updated information to parents.
- c) The Preschool Director will be responsible for reporting required information to Texas HHS- Child Care Licensing.
- d) Church rectors will be available for any needed counseling for staff and families.
- e) A list of mental health agencies providing needed support will be provided to parents.

G. Communication Plan

The Emergency Information Folder will be located by the classroom front door. A back-up copy will be kept in the classroom building safe room. The Emergency Information Folder contains emergency procedures as detailed in this manual and also contains parent contact information, back-up/alternative contact information and authorization for emergency care forms. These contacts are a critical component of the Communication Plan and should be kept current by parents and staff:

1. During emergency incidents, staff will call the primary contact number first and if no contact can be made the secondary contact number will be called. (Work phone numbers and alternative phone numbers). Staff will address any emergency needs related to the health and safety of the children first, and then contact parents once the situation has stabilized.
2. In a non-emergency incident, staff will call the primary contact number first and if no contact can be made secondary contact numbers next.
3. The preschool classroom phone (512-396-9033) will be available for use by staff for emergency contact calls as will the church main phone number (512-353-1979). The preschool phone voice-mail message may also be used to provide general status information during school incidents.
4. The preschool classroom phone (512-396-9033) may be used by parents to contact preschool staff.

5. Online message boards may also be used to communicate school information directly to parents.
6. Preschool staff may also post pertinent information on the front classroom exterior door/ message board regarding school status.
7. Teacher cell phones will be taken to any safe location during a school incident.

H. Animal Policy

State regulations require that we notify parents if St. Mark's has classroom pets. We do not, at this time, have classroom pets. Parents are not permitted to bring pets from home to the preschool.

I. Water Policy

State guidelines for water activities must be followed for the safety of all the children. See "*Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child-Care Centers*".

VII. PREPARING FOR SCHOOL

A. At Home

1. Parents should screen their child for any health conditions that would prevent the child from attending class. (i.e., rashes, runny nose, flushed cheeks/fever)
2. Children should be dressed for play and prepared to participate in indoor and outdoor activities
3. Children should be dressed in a fashion that will allow them to be independent when toileting and when putting on their socks and shoes
4. Clothing that might be removed, including jackets, hats and sweaters should be clearly marked with the child's name
5. Personal items (i.e. toys etc.) should be left at home unless requested by the staff.
6. Please apply sunscreen or insect repellent at home if needed. (Or complete the *Sunscreen/Insect Repellent Authorization Form*)

B. At School

1. A parent or guardian should accompany children to the classroom and bathroom for hand washing upon arrival. Be sure to sign your child in when you arrive. Children must be left in the presence of a staff member.
2. Please bring your child to school promptly. Children arriving on time enjoy being involved in the initial morning activities and will more naturally integrate into the daily plan. Please avoid bringing your child to school past **8:45 a.m.** This is when our structured classroom time begins.

C. After School

1. If anyone other than those people authorized on the enrollment form is to pick up your child, a note must be presented to the staff in advance. Children will not be released without prior written approval by a parent or guardian and a valid driver's license displayed by the person picking up the child.
2. Children should be picked up promptly after school. Late pick-up causes staff to delay next-day preparations and facility shut down. Repeated late pickups will result in an additional fee of \$1 a minute.

VIII. DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE POLICY*

A. Discipline must be:

1. Individualized and consistent for each child;
2. Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
3. Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

B. A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements; and
3. Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

5. There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child.

The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
4. Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
5. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
6. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
7. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
8. Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

**From Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance*

IX. DISMISSAL POLICY

A. Children (or families) may be dismissed from the preschool for behaviors or actions that are incongruent with or undermine the preschool's mission or philosophy. If a child/family, through whatever means, consistently creates a negative, hostile, divisive or otherwise inappropriate atmosphere, action will be taken for removal of that child from the preschool. The following list of behaviors may result in action, up to and including dismissal. The list is not all inclusive:

1. Refusal to comply with state mandated "*Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child-Care Centers*", or the policies, rules and guidelines as set forth by this handbook or the Executive Board;
2. Conduct, or behavior, whether by action or omission that interferes with, disrupts or adversely affects the inclusive, positive, orderly, efficient operation of the preschool;
3. Any other behavior that is not in the best interest of the preschool or that undermines our children's preschool experience.

X. NOTIFICATION OF THE GANG-FREE ZONE LEGISLATION

According to Texas Child Care Licensing, this school notifies all families that organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of this school is a violation of Gang Free Zone legislation, and is therefore subject to increased penalties under state law.

XI. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT TRAINING POLICY

- A. All staff employed by St. Mark's Episcopal Preschool will be educated in the law regarding child abuse, what signs to look for in the detection of abuse, both in circumstances and events which might indicate abuse in the children. It is a requirement that all persons employed by St. Mark's complete the course "*Safeguarding God's Children*" offered by a certified volunteer of the Episcopal Diocese. An additional hour of staff training is mandatory each year if the Safeguarding class is not up for renewal.
- B. "*Safeguarding God's Children*" classes will be offered to parents on an annual basis.
- C. Parents and staff are given the phone number to DFPS where they can report incidents of child abuse and neglect or get assistance with questions concerning child abuse.

XII. CHANGES IN SCHOOL POLICY

Parents will be notified in writing of any changes to our operational policy and enrollment agreement. At least one copy of the updated operational policy must be signed and dated for each family. We will keep the updated information in the child's record.

XIII. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES HEALTH PROTOCOLS

During local public health emergencies (i.e., COVID-19), certain operational policies at St. Mark's Episcopal Preschool will be changed and/or added. These policy changes may be implemented during a health emergency in accordance with state licensing requirements or may also be implemented based on regional/local health requirements or guidelines. These policies may supersede other current policies in this handbook. Parents will be notified in writing of the implementation of these policies and will also be notified when these special policies are no longer in effect.

A. General Policies

1. The preschool calendar may differ from the standard San Marcos Consolidated School District school calendar. Any changes will be communicated to the preschool students' families at the earliest possible date once they are deemed necessary by the Executive Board.
2. If a child has been absent due to illness, he or she may not return to class until symptom and (non-medicated) fever free for at least **72** hours.
3. Parents should notify the school if their child will be absent.
4. An *Attendance Acknowledgement and Disclosure Form* will be completed and signed by the child's parents.
5. A weekly family health screening questionnaire will be conducted by the preschool staff. The questionnaire will allow preschool staff to assess the health status of students and their families in regards to the immediate public health emergency.
6. Any decisions regarding changes to a child's attendance (using disclosure and screening information) will be made based on the totality of circumstances.

B. Parent Drop-Off

1. The drop-off of children will be completed outside of the classroom and at the direction of preschool staff.
2. Social distancing measures should be utilized during drop off. Masks on adults will be required while on school property.
3. Should the parent have a significant need to enter the classroom they may only do so with the approval of the director of the preschool and only after an appropriate health screening is conducted.
4. During drop-off children will be given a health screening as follows
 - a) Temperatures will be taken with a "no touch" thermometer
 - b) Each child's hands will be sanitized before entry

C. During School Hours

1. Temperatures will be taken at regular intervals during school hours using “touch free” thermometers.
2. During school hours non-teaching staff will not be allowed into the classroom except as authorized by the preschool director.
3. Each child will bring an individual snack. There will be no group snack distribution.

D. Parent Pick-up

1. The pick-up of children will be completed outside of the classroom and at the direction of preschool staff.
2. Social distancing measures should be utilized during drop off. Masks on adults will be required on school property.
3. Should the parent have a significant need to enter the classroom they may only do so with the approval of the Director of the preschool and only after an appropriate health screening is conducted.