

St. Mary's Preschool Handbook



2019-2020
School year



SCHOOL PHILISOPHY AND MISSION

St. Mary's School community holds the Eucharist and Mother Mary's intercession as the foundation of our faith. We consider parents to be the primary educators of their children and through a safe and loving environment, academic excellence is achieved. St. Mary's School provides quality catholic education in an ever growing environment of spiritual, intellectual and moral formation.

St. Mary's Preschool program provides an education encompassing the experiences of a Christian community in a caring family atmosphere. The program is designed to provide an appropriate nurturing and stimulating environment for the developing child during the crucial first years of learning. In a caring and positive atmosphere, we create a warm and happy place for your preschooler to learn. As we bridge the gap from home, we guide children to maintain a continued good self-image while building social skills in a school setting.

Schoolwide Learning Expectations

St. Mary's Preschool students are:

A. ACTIVE CHRISTIANS WHO:

- Pray
- Rejoice
- Adore
- Include
- Share
- Embody Christ

B. LIFE LONG LEARNERS WHO ARE:

- Enthusiastic
- Articulate
- Genuine
- Educated
- Resilient

C. ACTIVE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO:

- Support
- Encourage
- Respect
- Value
- Embrace

D. INTEGRATED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE:

- Multicultural
- Organized
- Responsible
- Accountable
- Leaders

ADMISSION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

POLICY:



A. Non-Discriminatory

St. Mary's School, mindful of its mission to be witness to the love of Christ for all, admits students of any race, color, and national and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities made available in the school. The school operates on a non-discriminatory basis.

B. Acceptance of School Philosophy and Policy

St. Mary's Preschool serves families in the community who subscribe to the school's philosophy and agree to abide by the policies and regulations of the school, as well as the terms and expectations stated in the contract.

C. Age of Admission

Enrollment is open to all children whose age is 3 or 4 and are already potty-trained by September 1.

E. Enrollment Process

1. Parents should visit the preschool with the child before applying. Check-in at the school office.
2. The Office Staff will provide the necessary forms for registration.
3. The following records must be presented at the time of registration: birth certificate, baptismal certificate, complete immunization record, enrollment application, registration form, release form, and emergency card. The parent(s) must submit to the office all registration forms including, the medical form signed by their doctor and have all required immunizations (3 Polio, 4 DTaP, 3 Hep B, 1 MMR, and 1 Varicella). Children may not enter the classroom until all documents have been submitted.
4. The Parent Handbook will be discussed during Preschool Orientation meeting that takes place days before the first day of school. The parent(s) must sign and return the form (Appendix I) stating that they have read and agree to abide by the policies in the Parent Handbook **before** the child may attend.
5. The principal may require the parent(s) to withdraw a child if, in his/her opinion, placement in the preschool is not in the child's and/or the preschool's best interest.

F. Financial Obligation

Registration fees must be paid at the time of registration and are non-refundable. Tuition may be paid in full once on August 16th. It may be paid in ten monthly installments (September 5th- June 5th). The decision for the method of paying your child's tuition is made at the time of registration. Enrollment is for the full school year (September to June).

CURRICULUM

Sensory, motor, perceptual and language skills are introduced through materials and activities which are both child-centered and teacher directed. Curriculum is planned in a way which emphasizes the *process* rather than the *product*, fostering a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Based on the theory that *children learn through play*, classroom routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation and reinforcement through repetition. Schedules are designed to balance structure and free choice, as well as active and quiet times.

Recognizing that children grow in predictable stages, we treat each child as an individual, working from the level each child has attained and moving forward one step at a time. We teach *a love of learning* by allowing children to experience their own stage of development, which helps them become successful life-long learners.

Curriculum activities include Religion, art, science, math, language, early literacy, music, dramatic arts, creative movement, environmental studies, and physical education.

A. Religion

St. Mary's Preschool offers a strong faith-based religion program. We believe that children are intrinsically religious and they can and should learn about the traditions and rituals of our catholic faith at this early age.

At St. Mary's we create an environment where the Eucharist is the center of our lives. Children are exposed to a vast scope of spiritual experiences in ways they are able to comprehend and assimilate. We make spiritual activities fun and we simplify some mysteries of the Catholic faith. Children learn to appreciate and respect sacred space and have a deeper knowledge sense of the presence and love of God. *We can not love someone do not get to know at a personal level.*



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At St. Mary's Preschool your child will receive the fundamentals to build a loving, lasting relationship with God and Mary, Our Blessed Mother.

B. Language and Early Literacy Program

Language and Literacy development during the preschool years has a significant impact on how well children learn to read and write during Kindergarten and the primary grades. Successful early literacy learning is closely associated with achievement in later schooling, social relations and work (National Research Council 1998).

Society places a high value on literacy and standards for what is considered literate and rising (National Association for the Education of the Young Children NAEYC 1997). At the same time concern is growing among teachers and parents about the number of children who are entering Kindergarten and First grade lacking experiences that support language and literacy learning. Preschool language and literacy activities can be significant in laying the foundation for later literacy learning.

St. Mary's program offers the Preschool Little Treasures reading program and Scholastic Big Day for Pre-K based on curriculum grounded in systematic, explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, and word knowledge, writing and language arts skills and strategies. Language development will include the use of language in social contexts. The use of language to support thinking and creativity, the use of decontextualized language, and the ability to attend to the structure of a story, sentences and words.

C. Physical Education Program

The preschooler is often a bundle of energy that never walks when running is an option and who sees every puddle as an invitation to jump. St. Mary's Preschool Program takes advantage of this natural energy by providing a wide range of **opportunities for children to explore, discover, play, sing, develop physically, to stay strong and healthy and to gradually master a broad spectrum of gross and fine motor skills.**

ST. MARY'S PRESCHOOL OPERATING POLICIES

HOURS OF OPERATION

Preschool hours are from 7:40 a.m. to 2:15 p.m., Monday through Friday. It is important that your child attend school every day and arrive on time. This is the beginning of responsible behavior and establishes good attendance habits that will prove important to your child for many years to come.

Parents must pick up their child on time. Students that are picked up after 2:30(Monday-Thursday) or 5 minutes after dismissal on early dismissal days will be considered late pick ups and will be sent to after school care program for which there is a fee.



HOLIDAYS

The preschool schedule of operation is the same as that of St Mary's School: September to June, including holidays.

ARRIVAL

Preschool begins their formal day at 7:45 a.m. All children must be signed in and out by the Parent /Guardian. For your child to get full benefit of the program, it is best that you child be at school no later than 8:15 a.m. No one is allowed in the classroom without a prek teacher present. All children coming to preschool need to be brought into the classroom by the parent, and should remain with the child until he/she has been received by the teacher. Please wait outside the classroom and keep your child sitting down not playing around. Do not enter the classroom until a TEACHER is present. You are not to leave your child with another parent. If you bring any younger siblings with you to drop off your child, we ask that they are in a stroller or are kept in your arms at all times. This is for insurance purposes and to avoid any accidents.

DISMISSAL

Children will be dismissed at 2:15 pm except on minimum days; in which case dismissal will be at 12:45 pm. Parents must pick up their child on time. Students that are picked up after 2:20 (Monday-Friday) or 12:05 pm on minimum days will be considered late pick ups and will be sent to after school care program for which there is a fee.

A child may not leave the school premises until he/she has been signed out and released to either the parent or an adult authorized on the release form. In this case, the adult must

present a valid photo id for the first time that he/she picks up the child. WITHOUT THIS PHOTO ID THE TEACHER WILL NOT RELEASE THE CHILD. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Parents cannot call the school to give verbal instructions to have someone who is not on the emergency card or the release form to pick up their child. Changes and/or additions must be made in person at the school office.

Preschoolers are particularly vulnerable to disputes between parents. The custodial parent sometimes asks us not to release a child to the other parent. For this reason, all divorced parents are asked to furnish the school with a notarized copy of the custody section of the divorce decree. The school will follow the legal indications. Your attention and cooperation are greatly appreciated in all these matters.

ABSENCE

Each time a student is absent, a written note must be given to the school office when the student returns explaining the absence. Medical verification will be required for doctor/dentist appointments. All absentee notes should include the date of the absence and the signature of a parent or guardian. Such excuses are kept on file by both the office and each teacher until the end of the year. **Without a written note within 24 hours from the parents, or doctor if applicable, the absence will automatically be considered unexcused.**

Students who has been absent from school for more than fifteen (15) days in one school year may not proceed to the next grade unless the following procedures are fulfilled.

- a) A consultation between teacher and principal is made as soon as the fifteenth absence has occurred.
- b) A conference is held with the parents to discuss possible remedial action or retention.
- c) Follow-up conference with the parents will be held to evaluate the action taken. The same procedure is to be followed in the case of serious long-term illness.

VACATION

If your child goes on vacation or is absent due to illness, the monthly tuition payment remains the same. Tuition is based on a yearly commitment. Please understand that our financial responsibilities continue whether or not your child is in school. There is also no tuition reduction when the school is closed for Christmas and Easter holiday. Therefore, to retain your child's enrollment, tuition for each month must be paid in full on the first of each month. All contractual obligations must be fulfilled in order to receive an appointment to register for the following year.

Emergency Procedures

Parent(s) are notified immediately of serious injury or sudden illness that occur during

school hours. For this reason you must notify the school office when there is a change of phone numbers or person(s) to be contacted when you cannot be reached. It is understood that enrollment at St. Mary's School confers upon the obligation to select emergency care providers in the absence of our ability to reach the parents and that no liability will be attached to such a decision. In the event of a natural disaster we will follow the direction of El Centro School District as to the opening or closing of the school. All families must also fill out an Earthquake Emergency Card at the beginning of each school year. These cards are to allow for systematic release of your child from the school grounds and/or necessary emergency care. Preschool children will only be released to people listed on the emergency card and/or release form. No exceptions.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM

At St. Mary's Preschool, we try to instill in our students a respect for each other's rights. Students learn to play and cooperate with teachers and with their peers. Learning to live and share together within our school community is an important part of integrating and developing social skills. Every effort will be made to inform you of your child's progress.

- ◆ Students should raise their hand to speak.
- ◆ Students should ask permission to go to the bathroom and to drink water.
- ◆ Students should respect other's property.
- ◆ Students should respect authority.
- ◆ Students shall avoid:
 - screaming or name calling at any time.
 - running.
 - pushing.
 - rough playing at any time
 - foul language.

At St. Mary's we follow a discipline system based on three different color cards and it works as follows:

GREEN CARD: means student shows good behavior throughout the day.

YELLOW CARD: warning! Behavior needs to be improved soon. Consequences will follow.

RED CARD: Behavior is unacceptable. Parent conference may need to be scheduled.

A green card will be changed to yellow after 3 verbal warnings. At the first verbal warning, the student will be told what behavior needs to improve and why he/she should not do it again. Some examples of verbal warning may include but not be limited to "continued talking, getting out of their seat constantly, not following rules, not following directions etc." After a yellow card; if another verbal warning is given, the student will have a brief conference with the teacher and consequences will follow.

Consequences may include but not be limited to " losing a sticker or privileges for the day (like being line leader), no special treats (like cup cakes) etc." An automatic yellow card

will be given if a student is " playing in the restroom, climbing on furniture or anything that may harm him/her or others." After 4 yellow cards a written warning will be given. After 5 yellow cards a parent conference will be scheduled.

An automatic red card will be given if a student is "fighting, name calling, pushing, hitting/hurting somebody, running, using foul language, rough playing at any time and throwing objects." Red card consequences may include but are not limited to " all pertaining to yellow cards, five minute time out, talk with the principal or spiritual advisor etc." After 3 red cards a parent conference will be scheduled.

St. Mary's preschool staff will not use corporal punishment at any time. Failure to comply will result in termination of employment.



DISCIPLINE AND EXPULSION FROM THE PROGRAM

All students are placed on an observation period during the first quarter.

1. Regular behavioral problems are reported to the parent(s), and they are asked to help correct the situation. A written warning may be given to the parent(s) with the approval of the principal.
2. The problem is referred to the principal and a conference will be held between the parent(s) and the teacher to develop a method of treatment for the problem. The teacher may offer names of appropriate local support services to the parent(s).
3. After the above procedures have been followed, a student may be removed from the program if:
 - a. The child poses a threat to self, staff, or other students in the program.
 - b. The child behaves in a manner that is difficult to manage in a large group.
 - c. The child or parent uses abusive language or threatens other students or staff members.
 - d. The child or parent continues to act against preschool policies as explained in the parent handbook.
 - e. The teacher's professional judgment is that the child can no longer function effectively in the program and/or the program is being adversely affected by the child's presence.
4. It is the policy of the preschool to notify the parent(s) in writing when infractions of policies occur and hold a conference to discuss the problem before a child is removed from the program. However, some situations may occur that jeopardize the welfare of the students and/or staff. The teacher reserves the right to dismiss a student immediately with the approval of the principal if such an incident occurs.
5. A parent may submit an appeal of the decision made by the teacher by filing a written grievance with St. Mary's school principal.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Through our program we provide opportunities for both teachers and parents to work together for the total enrichment of each child such as preschool parties, sports day, field trips, etc. In order to maintain a "child-centered community," we keep in close contact with our parents. We urge you to keep us informed of any changes your child might be experiencing at home so that, while at school, we may better understand his/her specific needs. Please inform your child's teacher about anything occurring within his/her world that might affect his/her attitude or behavior at school (lack of sleep, busy weekend, guest in the home, family illness, etc.) This kind of daily communication is very important to help meet your child's physical and emotional needs.

Each family enrolled at St. Mary's Preschool is required to participate in all the school sponsored activities stated in the contract. Our Pre-K program always needs help with cleaning toys, cutting paper, assisting in classroom setting, etc. **If a parent would like to volunteer regularly (more than one time), they must be fingerprinted, show proof of TB test and a statement of good health in order to comply with California laws.** There are many ways that a parent can volunteer at school. Check with your child's teacher or the school office for more information.

UNIFORM

Monday through Thursday, preschool students are to wear the P.E. uniform (girls: skort/polo blouse, boys: shorts/t-shirt both with calf-length white socks and all-white tennis shoes. Winter for boys and girls: sweatpants/sweatshirt with t-shirt underneath). On Fridays, students will wear complete uniform (Girls: shift with emblem, white blouse, tie, white fold-down socks, and oxford shoes; Boys: grey pants, white button shirt with emblem, tie, navy blue socks, and black shoes—(black belt is not required for preschool students) and, if needed, jacket or sweater with emblem. Please do not mix P.E. uniform with complete uniform. All uniforms and accessories are available through Dennis Uniforms (4217 Ponderosa Ave., San Diego or www.dennisuniform.com). Preschool students **MUST** keep a change of clothing in the classroom (just in case), this does not need to be uniform clothing. No jewelry or play jewelry will be allowed. Teachers will remove any jewelry and give it to parents at the end of the day and they will not be responsible for any lost or misplaced items.

The general dress code guidelines of the school are that:

- * The uniform must be clean, ironed, neat, and free from damage. White shirts need to be bleached regularly (the new pressed on emblems will not damage in bleach) Emblems must be in good condition and on shirts, blouses, sweaters, and jumpers.
- * Label all clothing with your child's name.
- * No make-up, nail polish, lip gloss, or colored chapstick is allowed.
- * All students must come well combed and with traditional hair styles. Students may not use colored gel.

(Girls) For long hair, ponytails are required. Bangs cannot be longer than eyebrow length. If bangs are longer, then bobby pins must be used. Ribbons or scrunchies must be navy blue, white or uniform plaid. Hair must be completely out of the face. No hair extensions.

(Boys) Hair must be short all around including above the ears, off the collar, and above the eyebrows. Hair must be modest, conservative, short and well combed. Boys will not be allowed to wear long hair, spiked hair, or shaved heads; extreme fad haircuts are prohibited.

- * Girls may only wear small stud earrings; boys may not wear earrings. Girls and boys may wear necklaces with religious sentiment on full uniform days. Religious jewelry must be worn in a modest and respectful way. For safety reasons, necklaces must be kept inside their shirt and not hanging outside of clothing. All other jewelry is not permitted (such as chokers and bracelets). No fads allowed such as but not limited to body piercing or sticker tattoos.

- * Please make sure that your child has uniforms that fit. It is not acceptable to wear the same uniform for several years because though the uniform is in good condition, your child has grown and the uniform no longer fits appropriately. Definition for skirt length: The skirt must touch the ground when student kneels.

- * If an undershirt is used, it must be tucked in. Undershirts must be all white. No color or logo. PE shirts cannot be used as undershirts.

- * All accessories worn with uniform (such as scarves or hair ribbons) must be navy blue or white. If a turtleneck is worn, it must be white.

LOST & FOUND

All personal items must be permanently labeled with full name, grade and class. Clothing, school bags, books, notebooks, purses and wallets should be clearly identified. **School personnel is not responsible for lost items.**

Lost clothing will be taken to the office.

COMMUNICATION

We will be using a school monthly newsletter and email communication for announcements. The monthly newsletter contains important information for upcoming events for both parents and students. It will also contain information about what is going to be introduced in the classroom. Please take the time to read it.

The school staff will be regularly available for conferences with parent(s) *except* when on supervision duty or during class time. A special conference can be made by appointment.

Conferences are formally scheduled to inform you of your child's progress. Parents will be notified in advance of the day and time of their appointment.

ILLNESS

Students who have any sort of communicable disease will not be allowed to attend preschool. Medication cannot be given by teacher or staff. Students must be fever-free at least 24 hours before being accepted back into the classroom. Our main concern is for the general well-being of all students. In addition, it is difficult for a sick child to function at school when he/she is not feeling well. If a child shows signs of an illness or injury that could impair your child's participation in daily activities your child will be sent home. If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will notify parents immediately. If parents do not respond after 30 minutes of contacting them, we will use emergency contacts listed in the child's file. Under certain circumstances, a doctor's note may need to be presented upon your child's return to the center.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, have them stay at home:

Fever (must be fever free for 24 hours)

Vomiting

Excessive Cough

Excessive Runny Nose

Wheezing

Conjunctivitis (pink eye)

Head Lice

Undiagnosed Skin Rash

Overall feeling of not being well (tiredness, sore throat, ear ache)

Please do not become upset with us if your child is not accepted on a particular day for any of the above reasons. We have a responsibility to the other students, the staff, and the parents. A sick child needs to be at home. Remember, no job is more important than your child is.



PERSONAL PROPERTY

Students are not allowed to bring toys to school except on special Show-N-Tell days scheduled by the teacher. Please have your child's name clearly marked on these items. Some items that should not be brought to school include pets, toy guns, sharp toys, marbles, anything too small or anything with a violent or aggressive nature: i.e. Gameboy, Ninja Turtles, Power Rangers, etc. **The principal reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the toy.** The preschool is not responsible for damage to personal property or lost articles.

SNACKS & LUNCH

It is mandatory that your child eats a nutritious meal before coming to school. The school does not provide snacks, nor can teachers purchase snacks at school. Parents must bring a nutritious snack and lunch for their child. Non-nutritional snacks such as chips, chocolates, cookies, sugary drinks (bring only 100% juice), caffeine drinks, Gatorade, sweet breads (such as cake, cupcakes, pinguinos, donuts, etc), gum and candies are not allowed. If your child has any allergies to food, please make sure that you provide us the proper documentation from the Doctor stating your child's food allergies. Children will not be allowed into the classroom without a snack and lunch.

BIRTHDAYS

The teacher will have something planned to acknowledge you child's special day. Parents may bring cupcakes and juice or something else approved by the PK Director to pass out at the end of the day. However, we do not set aside time for an actual "party". If you plan to have a party at your home, we are asking that you invite all the students in the class so that there are no hurt feelings from students who are left out. Please do not bring gifts to school.

NAP TIME

The school provides each child with a small cot to sleep on during rest time. Parents need to provide a small pillow, crib sheet, and a blanket for their child to use during rest time. These need to be taken home each week to be washed and returned.

FIELD TRIPS

Parents are required to fill out and sign the permission slip provided by St. Mary's School so your child may be permitted to participate in a field trip.

Parents participating in field trips by volunteering to drive students **MUST REGISTER A PROFILE ON CMG CONNECT (cmgconnect.org) AND GET A BACKGROUND CHECK AS WELL AS COMPLETE A SERIES OF TRAINING VIDEOS REQUIRED BY THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO.** We also require **EVIDENCE OF BOTH A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE AND AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COVERAGE** with the policy number on it to the school office where a photocopy will be made. This is mandatory in order to comply with California State Law. Every child must have a car seat. Each driver must also have a first aid kit containing basic medical items in the vehicle.

Failure to provide any of the above listed documents as required will result in your child not being permitted to go on the field trip. We suggest that these documents be brought to the office one week before the date of the field trip.

