



## Preschool Handbook

August 2024

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

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

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

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

In Christ,

Ms. Marjorie Hill, Principal

Mrs. Jen Christiansen and Mrs. Michelle Elias, Teachers

## **Mission of St. Ray's**

St. Raymond School is a joy-filled community, rooted in the virtues and teachings of Jesus Christ. We partner with parents to help each child reach their greatest academic, social and spiritual potential. Students and families find belonging and value, and are invited into lasting relationships that form our community.

## **Preschool Age Requirements and Hours**

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

Students who are 3 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> are eligible to enroll in our half-day or full-day program. Our half-day program and full-day program, for 3 year olds, has two options: Monday through Friday or Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The half day program meets 7:55 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. The full day program runs Monday through Thursday 7:55 a.m. - 3:05 p.m. and Friday 7:55 a.m. -2:15 p.m.

Students who are 4 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> are eligible to enroll in our half-day program or full-day program. Our half-day program, for 4 year olds, meets on Monday – Friday from 7:55 a.m. – 11:00 am. Our full-day program is Monday through Thursday from 7:55 a.m. – 3:05 p.m. and Friday 7:55 a.m. -2:15 p.m.

## **Arrival Procedures**

Students in preschool may arrive any time between 7:30 a.m. and 7:55 a.m. Tardy bell rings at 7:55 a.m. Families will park in the parking lot off of Douglas Ave. Preschool students will enter the school at door #6. Parents will get their child out of the car and a staff member will then walk your child into the building. If you arrive after 7:55 a.m., you will need to park by the office and bring your child in at door #1.

## **Departure Procedure**

Families will park in the parking lot off of Douglas Ave. Students enrolled in our half day program are dismissed from door #6 at 11:00 a.m. Students enrolled in our full day program dismiss from Door #6 at 3:05 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and at 2:15 p.m. on Friday. Any children not picked up by 3:15 p.m. (M-Th) or 2:25 p.m. (Friday) will be taken to EDS and charged the appropriate rate.

**\*Please note there will be a couple of days throughout the year when the whole school will dismiss at 11:30 a.m. All preschool children will dismiss at 11:30 a.m. and please note that EDS is not offered in the afternoon on these days.**

## **Extended Day Service (EDS)**

Morning EDS begins at 7 a.m. Students will enter at door #10 on Douglas Street. A staff member will sign the student in. At 7:30 a.m. the students will be brought to their classroom.

For afternoon EDS pick up, parents should ring the doorbell at door #10 located on Douglas Street. EDS is available until 6:00 p.m.

If you know your child will be attending the Extended Day Program after school, please send a note in your child's folder, email your child's teacher, or message the teacher through Seesaw to let them know. If they will be going on a regular basis, please indicate which day(s).

## **Free Play**

Play is important for a child's development and for children to bond. Much learning occurs during play time. The following is a list of play areas used at St. Raymond's.

### **Art/Writing Center**

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

### **Block Center:**

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

### **Paint:**

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

### **Housekeeping/Dramatic Play Area:**

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

### **Puzzles:**

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

### **Library:**

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

## **Math Manipulatives**

- Promotion of fine motor skills
- Sorting and ordering
- Discovering patterns
- Shapes
- Measurement
- Problem solving and reasoning
- Number concepts
- Representation

## **Curriculum**

Saint Raymond School preschool program employs a Reggio Emilia-Inspired, project-based approach to early childhood education. Teachers observe and document the interactions, discussions, and fascinations of children. By developing learning opportunities from these observations, the curriculum “emerges” from children’s interests and ideas. Project work provides ample opportunity for discussion, decision-making, choices, cooperation, and evaluation during the course of an investigation. Projects can last days, weeks, or even months based on the interests and enthusiasm of the children. Through these projects, teachers routinely plan and deliver a wide variety of educational experiences, which incorporate emergent literacy, music, art, dramatic play, motor development, math, nature, and science. By exploring projects of children’s interest in great detail, children are excited by the learning process. This enthusiasm for knowledge, combined with the ability to experience project work in detail, will foster a predisposition for “life-long” learning.

## **Elements of a Reggio-Inspired PreSchool**

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education was developed from a city-sponsored educational system serving children up to age six, in a town in northern Italy bearing that name. The Reggio Emilia educational system is commonly recognized as one of the best programs for young children worldwide. International study groups of educators from around the globe journey to Italy annually to get a first-hand glimpse of this exceptional philosophy in action. Because in Italy this approach is integrated into the fabric of the local government, community, and its people, it cannot be replicated exactly in the United States. However, to be “Reggio-Inspired” is to adopt the core values and beliefs of this approach to educating young children. Such principles include:

### **The Image of the Child**

We view every child as strong, capable, independent, curious, and full of imagination. We empower children to think, question, investigate, explore, and help navigate the journey of learning.

### **Children are collaborators and learn through interaction within their communities**

Children are collaborators and work best when included in a community as opposed to working independently. Therefore, Reggio Emilia places an emphasis on working in small groups, which is based on the idea that we form ourselves through interaction with peers, adults, and the world around us. Children are natural communicators and should be encouraged to express themselves however they feel they can.

One of the most profound aspects of Reggio Emilia is known as The Hundred Languages of Children written by the founder of the philosophy Loris Malaguzzi. This may include words, movement, drawings, paintings, buildings, sculptures and more.

### **The role of environment**

The environment of the classroom is viewed as the “third teacher.” The environment should be a reflection of the children, teachers, and parents who live and learn there. It should be thoughtful, imaginative, enticing, and respect the image of the child.

### **The role of the teacher**

The teacher is viewed as a partner in learning, with the children. By listening, observing, and documenting children's work, the teacher is equipped to guide children's learning experiences, and "co-construct" knowledge.

### **Documentation is a critical component of communication**

By documenting the children's work through photographs, video, written word, displays, etc., teachers tell the story of the children's early childhood experiences. Every child has their own portfolio, consisting of artwork, photographs, information related to developmental milestones, and early learning standards.

### **Parents are partners in education**

Learning takes place not just within the school, but also at home and throughout the community. We encourage parents to participate in project work, special events, and the daily life of the school. We seek an integrated learning community, where teachers, parents, and administrators work together to meet the needs of the children.

*Pulled from the following sources:*

*Working in the Reggio Way by Julianne P. Wurm and The Compass School Blog*

### **Prayer**

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

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here. Ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.
- Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.
- Hail Mary, full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
- Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### **Mass Attendance**

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

### **Adjustment Period**

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

### **Attire**

Students in our preschool program do not have a uniform. Please make sure your child comes in clothes that they can manage independently. Dress clothes and "Sunday Best" should be reserved for special occasions like picture day, etc. We often participate in messy activities like painting. Please have your child refrain from wearing costume jewelry. A complete set of clothing should be provided in a labeled ziploc bag at the beginning of the year in case of emergencies. (top, bottom, socks and underwear) Coats, jackets, hats, etc. should also be labeled with your child's name. Closed toe shoes, preferably gym shoes, should be worn everyday.

Our classrooms go outside for recess as much as possible. Please check the forecast and send your child in appropriate layers. In winter months please send mittens/gloves, hats, scarves, snow pants, boots and warm coats for outside recess. Also, if your child wears snow boots, please send a pair of shoes in their backpack to change into.

### **Backpacks**

Please send your child to school with a **full size backpack**. A toddler/preschool backpack is too small for folders to fit into. Thank you for adhering to this request.

### **Toys**

We ask that you keep your child's toys and personal belongings at home.

### **Food - Snack and Lunch**

Preschool classes will be having a snack each morning. Snack should be sent in a labeled ziploc bag along with a water bottle. If the snack requires a spoon, please include it.

Students enrolled in the full day preschool program must bring lunch each day. **Please make sure their snack is separate from their lunch.** Parents will either need to send a drink or purchase milk (white or chocolate) at the beginning of the school year.

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

### **Assessment and Conferences**

Teachers are assessing and evaluating students' progress on a daily basis. What students say and do allows teachers to make strategic moves in the moment and for the next lesson. Teachers in preschool complete a progress report for each child that is shared with families three times a year. Conferences are held in November and March. Conferences are mandatory for every family. Teachers are available throughout the year for conferences as well, but we ask parents to arrange this ahead of time, rather than show up unexpectedly.

### **Discipline**

We define discipline as setting limits, guiding behavior and helping children to recognize appropriate behavior. We believe that all children should experience success and the wonder of learning. We strive for an environment that gives children the opportunity to explore and experiment within consistent, age appropriate limits. If an issue arises, we seek to understand the reason behind the behavior. It is through this understanding that we gain a better picture of the whole child and work to address issues most effectively. Conscious Discipline guides our understanding of teaching self-regulation and social emotional skills in our students.

Providing a safe environment for every child to learn and play is of utmost importance. If a child bites, kicks, hits, scratches, spits, or pinches, the child will be removed from the group setting and a parent is notified. This serves as a serious warning. If a mark is left on another child, the child will be immediately removed from class and an adult will need to pick the child up.

### **Child Protection**

Please be aware that all staff members are required by law to report suspected incidents of child abuse. It is not the intent of the school to become involved in individual family matters; however, in some cases when the physical and/or emotional safety of any child is in suspect, the suspicion will be communicated to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Details regarding any individual child's protection are a matter held in strictest confidence by all adults involved. The calls are anonymous.

## **Communication**

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

Students will come home every day with a green folder that will serve as a home to school communication tool. Please return the folder every day.

A family envelope is sent home every Thursday with oldest/only children (for M-W-F three year olds it goes home on Friday). Important all school notices are included in this envelope. Flyers for after-school activities, announcements, etc. are a part of the envelope.

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

School Phone Number – 815-722-6626

Mrs. Christiansen's email: [jchristiansen@csrn.org](mailto:jchristiansen@csrn.org)

Mrs. Elias's email: [melias@csrn.org](mailto:melias@csrn.org)

Teachers will also send home weekly updates on the learning that occurred during the week through Seesaw.

Seesaw is an app and each family will receive a QR code to sign up. Teachers are always available to conference with parents via email or by phone or with a pre-arranged scheduled time. Please note teachers have 24 hours to respond to emails and phone calls.

## **Rest Time**

Full day students take a rest time daily. Students are allowed to bring in a child size blanket, a pillow, and a small stuffed animal to help them rest and relax. Please send these items in a bag to be kept at school. Students who don't sleep have time to lie quietly on their cots and rest. Rest bags will be sent home occasionally to be laundered and returned to school with your child.

## **Labeling**

To avoid giving students the wrong items, please make sure you label EVERYTHING with your child's first and last name. This includes your child's pillow, blanket, lunch box, snack, water bottle, backpack, and extra clothes.

## **Birthdays and Party Invitations**

We love celebrating birthdays at St. Raymond's! For those children whose birthday is in the summer we celebrate their half birthday. If you are having a party, please send the invitations to the child's home or through email. Party invitations may only be distributed in the class if every child is being invited or if all the girls are being invited or all the boys.

## **Volunteering/Parent Participation**

We value and appreciate parent volunteers. When the need for volunteers arises, we will reach out with the specifics. In order to be allowed to volunteer, you must have proof on file that you have attended the Protecting God's Children Class. Please direct questions regarding this to Kelly Alt in the office. She can be reached by calling the school (815)722-6626 or via email at [kalt@csrn.org](mailto:kalt@csrn.org).

## **Bathroom Expectations**

**Your child is expected to be completely potty-trained when entering school.** This means that your child can independently use the school's bathroom urinals or stalls appropriately, wipe themselves, and communicate the need to

go. Pull-ups are not permitted. Teachers and aides are not permitted to assist or help clean your child in the event of an accident, unless written permission is given. If an accident occurs, the child will be assisted to the bathroom, but will be required to change their clothes independently. If a child is NOT able to do this, parents will be called and required to come assist their child. If a child has three accidents in a span of ten school days they will need to stay home for two weeks to be re-potty trained before they return to school.

### **Accidents and Injuries**

In the event your child has a minor accident or injury, teachers will fill out an accident report that is emailed to the parent/guardian as well as the principal. If a child has an injury to the head, a phone call will be made. Based on the facts provided, parents can make a decision on whether to pick up the child immediately or wait until the end of the day.

### **Illnesses/Absences**

All student absences need to be called into the office each day your child is absent. If a student begins to exhibit any symptoms of illness, they will immediately be brought to the office. The office will contact you if necessary. Please refer to the Parent/Student Handbook for information regarding other types of illnesses.

### **Role of Preschool Support Staff**

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



## St. Raymond's School Preschool Handbook Acknowledgment Form

This 2024-2025 Preschool Handbook is an important document that should be read and discussed at home. It is expected that you are familiar and understand the policies and procedures of the school. We understand that you agreed to adhere to these policies and procedures of the school when you registered your child. We ask that you spend some extra time to review all of the sections of the handbook and to save this document for future reference.

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

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,



Ms. Marjorie Hill, Principal

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

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Homeroom Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

