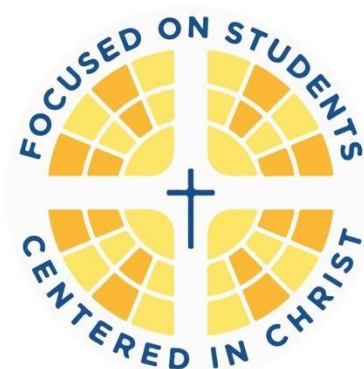


ST. MARY

CATHOLIC SCHOOL
LITTLETON



**PRESCHOOL
PARENT
HANDBOOK
2020-2021**

Dear Parents,

The staff of St. Mary Catholic Preschool welcomes you to our school community! If this will be your child's first classroom learning environment, we are glad that you have chosen this path and anticipate a wonderful experience for your child. If you are returning this year, we look forward to building upon last year's growth and development.

Our dedicated professional staff will provide a well-balanced curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for young children. Our curriculum begins the moment your child enters the preschool and greets those around him / her and continues until he / she leaves at the end of the day eager to share all that they learned. Experiences throughout the day prepare him / her for a variety of learning opportunities that foster faith, creative thinking, problem solving, social interaction, as well as emotional, intellectual and physical growth.

Our program enables children to proceed through their preschool experience at their own pace. Although children pass through stages of development in a predictable sequence, their growth in our program is individually observed, assessed and recorded. A balance between free choice, intentional centers and structure encourages independence, responsibility, self-confidence and growth. We are looking forward to helping your child discover the joys of learning!

This handbook was written to help familiarize you with the policies and procedures in our preschool and is a supplement to the St. Mary Catholic School Handbook. This document is not meant to supersede the school's handbook. We hope you read this guide and keep it as a handy reference.

St. Mary Catholic Preschool respects parents as the primary and most important provider of faith formation, care and nurturing for their children. We believe parents and teachers are partners in your child's growth and education and look forward to establishing this partnership.

We know how important these early years are to you and your child. Our staff and I are available to answer any questions you may have about your child and our program. We consider it an honor to serve this community and this program.

Sincerely,

Tracy Seul, M. Ed.
Director of Preschool Ministry

School Staff

Our staff is also available through Sycamore Education (Pass-A-Note) or email.

Principal: Fr Stefan Zarnay
303-798-2375
frstefan@stmarylitleton.com

Director: Tracy Seul
720-732-2764 (call or text)
tseul@stmarylitleton.com

Teachers: Mary Ann Graham
Kathryn Demchak

Teacher Assistants: Rachel D'Eredita
Amy O'Keefe
Melissa Denny

Mission Statement

At St. Mary Catholic Preschool, we provide a dynamic and enriched environment that strives to take children as they come and challenge children's developmental growth within the wholeness of the Catholic faith. We nurture their progress through child-centered experiences and quality opportunities that make play their work. We empower parents to be the first educators and life-long advocates for their children. We encourage professionalism and personal growth of our staff to accomplish our goals and make every day count.

Purpose

As a ministry of St. Mary Catholic Church with St. Mary Catholic School, we serve children, families and the community by providing quality early childhood education and extended care to children 3-5 years of age.

Our academic preschool day operates as a half day preschool for 3- and 4-year olds. The preschool session runs from 8:00am (doors open at 7:45) to 12:00pm, Monday through Friday, with a flexible extended enrichment program available from 7:00am to 6:00pm.

St. Mary Catholic Preschool serves 3-5-year-old students who are grouped according to age, days attending and developmental needs. We are a non-profit, church ministry that follows the precepts of the K-8 school. Lead teachers are all group leader qualified and have many years experience working in early childhood education. The licensed capacity each day is 44 children per day.

Statement of Philosophy

We Believe:

- Our faith is at the center of everything we teach, however, we strive to support the family and to respect the privacy, individual cultural and religious differences among our children.

- Your nurturing, love and support is the most important factor in your child's development.
- Parents and teachers are partners in your child's care and education.
- Each child should be encouraged to have a positive self-image, and it is the responsibility of the parent and teacher to nurture the child's self-esteem.
- Our role as educators is to provide the best academic and social/emotional start your child can have that supports the stellar education they receive in our K-8 school. We ensure students thrive academically as well as socially in order to make friends, empathize with others and negotiate with others to solve problems and creatively think beyond a textbook throughout their educational career.
- Teachers have a responsibility to continue their own education so that they will be able to plan classroom curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, free of bias, consistent with current knowledge of Early Childhood Education and challenges each child beyond her potential.
- Children deserve a nurturing, safe and happy environment that promotes their natural curiosity and desire to learn.
- Curriculum begins when your child enters the building and continues until you leave with them at the end of the day. There are curricula that teach certain objectives that come in a box and are helpful, but not the end all to our day. While those objectives are important to learn, we assess each child to understand her developmental skills and project growth beyond where a curriculum can predict.
- A child's work is his play. As a play-based center, we teach with intention. Intentional play gives play a purpose so that items like blocks and scissors become our tools to learning. With focused and open-ended questions, we encourage problem solving and creative thinking as your child works.

Program Goals and Objectives

Our program is child-centered and based on the belief that play is the best way for children to learn. Children are encouraged to choose freely from a wide range of learning experiences including:

- Problem solving and critical thinking curriculum
- Creative expression through media of movement, musical rhythms and art
- Development of manipulative skills and motor coordination through puzzles, carpentry, blocks, bikes and other gross motor opportunities
- Increase of knowledge through special events, in-house field trips, cooking, and science explorations
- Integration of sensory skills through water, sand, playdough and other sensory materials
- Growth of language and literacy through stories, songs and fingerplays
- Development of social and emotional skills through dramatic play
- Spiritual and Catholic faith expression through daily prayers, Scripture stories and songs

Our preschool is a balanced program, offering both child-directed and teacher-directed experiences. The daily schedule includes free choice of time spent in learning centers, as well as group times for creative movement, music, storytelling, gross motor coordination, storytelling and dramatization. St. Mary Catholic Preschool's goal is to provide happy, worthwhile play experiences in a Catholic environment that helps your child learn and develop under the guidance of qualified, understanding and professional teachers.

It is also our goal to help prepare your child for his or her role in tomorrow's world. We offer a program that will enrich life and enhance development in a way that your child can work and play more cooperatively at home and adjust more readily to elementary school.

Our program is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Broaden the child's scope beyond the immediate environment
2. Develop a sense of cooperation and understanding of others' feelings and emotional needs
3. Confident communication skills
4. Coordination of large and fine motor muscles
5. Introduce a lasting appreciation for music, art and literature
6. Develop independence
7. Encourage natural curiosity
8. Nurture Catholic faith by appreciating scripture and practicing prayer
9. Create life-long learners who have a joy of learning and devotion to faith

Curriculum

Our curriculum goals and objectives for each child, as well as your child's developmental progress help us to assess what your child's needs to know and how your child learns to ensure a life-long love of learning. There are "boxes" of curriculum that help us to guide your child's learning and create developmentally appropriate lessons to ensure progress, however, the passion and experience of our teachers expand on the objectives in the curriculum to spark creative thinking, problem solving and social/emotional experiences.

Some of our curriculum guides include: Learning without Tears, Creative Curriculum, Math in Focus, Scholastic's My Big World, National Geographic's Explorer, Young Athletes, and CR Success (phonics).

Partners in Education

A number of organizations partner with us to provide the best possible start for your child.

ACECC - Arapahoe County Early Childhood Council provides coaches and training for our staff and support for parent education and resources.

Children's Advisory Network - is a non-profit organization that screens for vision, hearing, speech and language. They also provide deeply discounted therapy and hippotherapy.

STEP Therapy - is a not-for-profit consortium of therapists that screen for occupational and developmental delays. They also provide therapy and support to our staff and families.

Special Olympics - we participate in a grant program that offers curriculum and support through an inclusive exercise and sports program called Young Athletes. Teachers have been trained as coaches so that the students can participate in exercise and sports activities during a focused time.

Days and Hours of Operation

St. Mary Catholic Preschool offers a part day preschool program with full day availability when needed. Children must be 3 or 4 years of age by October 1 of the school year to be eligible for enrollment.

Preschool day - 8am - 12pm

Hot Lunch Bunch 12pm - 1pm

Enrichment care (SMEED) - 7am - 8am and flexible pick up times from 12pm - 6pm

The preschool follows St. Mary Catholic School's calendar year. The school is closed for Federal holidays, teacher in-service days, Christmas break, spring break and Catholic religious holidays. A calendar with dates specific to the current school year will be distributed in the summer mailing.

Class Sizes

We are committed to limiting our class sizes to national rather than state standards for student to teacher ratios, 1:8 (3 years) or 1:10 (4 years). At the last hour of the day, when students may be combined with the elementary school SMEED, (5:00 pm – 6:00 pm) we follow the ratio guidelines for the youngest child in our care.

Admission and Enrollment

Non-discrimination policy

The Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Denver, under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L. and at the direction of the Secretary for Catholic Schools, state that all their Catholic schools admit students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the schools. Furthermore, Archdiocesan schools admit handicapped students in accord with Archdiocesan Policy No. 2000 concerning student admission. These schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, age, handicap, color, national or ethnic policies, employment practices, scholarship and loan programs or athletic or other school administered programs.

The Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Denver, under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Samuel Aquila, S.T.L. and at the direction of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, attests that none of their Catholic schools discriminates on the basis of sex in its admission policies, treatment of students or its employment practices.

Eligibility

All children **must** be toilet trained before beginning school because we have no facilities to change diapers. We understand that accidents will happen, and we will do everything we can to help your child under these circumstances.

Children entering the program must either turn 3 for the 3-year-old program or 4 for the 4-year-old program, by October 1st of that year.

Child Records

Prior to your child's start date, these forms must be returned to the school:

- Child Profile Form, Emergency Contact Form

- Registration Form
- Child Authorization Form and Health Information
- General Health Form (physical)
- Immunization Record
- Topical Treatment Release
- Compliance Form
- Young Athletes Permission Form
- Screening Release

Special Needs

St. Mary Preschool provides equal opportunity for children with special needs. A reasonable effort will be made to accommodate any child's needs to integrate the child with other children, within the capacity of the existing staff. Upon enrollment of a child with special health care needs, we must obtain a copy of an existing individualized health care plan for the child that can be reviewed, adopted, and implemented by our staff. We will inform our nurse consultant about the needs of the child working together, with you, the parent, to develop an accommodation plan. Admittance will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. After the evaluation, we would admit special needs children on a trial basis for one month. During this time, we will work closely with parents, the nurse consultant, teachers and other specialists to ensure the setting is the best fit for the child. At the end of the month, we will meet with all parties to determine if we are meeting the child's needs. If we are not able to meet the child's needs, we will give parents the time and assistance needed to find more appropriate care.

If your child requires accommodations or has an IEP, please indicate that on the registration and Child Profile Form and provide us with a copy of any treatment or assessment information relevant to your situation.

Admissions Priorities

Enrollment begins in late January and continues throughout the year as space allows. First priority is given to students that have siblings enrolled in St. Mary Catholic School. Families registered with St. Mary Catholic Church have priority over non-parish and non-affiliated families. Date of registration and availability will determine enrollment when a waiting list exists.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition is explained on the contract and collected by FACTS Management. Any additional charges incurred throughout the year will be added as incidental charges through FACTS (i.e., staying extra hours in a day or adding days to your child's schedule).

The registration fee collected at the time of registration is used for classroom supplies.

Other tuition information is available in the St. Mary Catholic School Handbook. A tuition schedule is included in Appendix A.

Scholarships and Discounts

All scholarships and discounts are handled at the St. Mary Catholic School level. Please notify the office to see how you might qualify.

Confidentiality

St. Mary Catholic Preschool keeps information that is personal in nature regarding children, families and staff on file, locked and inaccessible to people other than staff members. Staff members are expected to keep this information confidential, not discussing, releasing or sharing the information outside of the school staff unless prior written permission is granted. Individuals that have access to student files as part of our regulated inspections include sub-contracted registered nurse consultant, Colorado Department of Human Services officials and Tri-county health department.

Outdoor activity and Sunscreen

St. Mary's Catholic School generally follows the Littleton Public School closing recommendations for weather and other emergency conditions. The radio and television stations will announce the closing. St. Mary's does not generally have a late start schedule. Watch for specific school information if delays are expected in the area. Snow days will also be posted on the school's online communication system (Sycamore).

In the event of extreme hot or extreme cold weather (below 20 degrees or above 90 degrees), the Director will determine the safety of children playing outdoors. As a rule of thumb, if the weather conditions are extreme, alternate indoor large motor activities will be available. We immediately return to our classrooms when we hear thunder or see lightning. If there is a warning in the area, we do not leave until the warning has been cleared.

Emergency Evacuations

If we need to evacuate the building and cannot return to the building for an extended period of time, teachers and children will walk to Mackintosh Academy located south on Prince St. Each parent will be notified by phone and will be asked to show identification when coming to pick up a child in an emergency situation. It is important that you notify the school of any changes in your phone number!

Guidelines for outdoor play

We play outside every day. Please provide outdoor clothing or layers that accommodate the weather - boots, mittens, hats, coats, etc. You may even want to pack an extra set of clothes because we might get wet, too!

Sunscreen

According to state regulations, students need to come to school with sunscreen already applied, year-round. When you sign your child in, you are acknowledging that sunscreen is applied. Please let the teacher know if that did not occur that morning and we will be happy to help your child with sunscreen before we go outside.

Any child at the preschool for longer than 2 hours will have sunscreen applied to exposed skin prior to going outside. Sunscreen will be reapplied before going outside if it has been longer than 2 hours since the last application. Sunscreen may be applied by a child over 4 years of age with direct supervision of a staff member. Sunscreen may not be applied if there are open wounds or broken skin unless there is a written order by a prescribing practitioner. A medical provider's note is required if sunscreen will not be used (skin condition, allergy), and alternate protection from the sun is required.

Sunscreen will be applied according to manufacturer's instructions. The preschool will provide and reapply sunscreen (or use sunscreen provided by the parents for their child, labeled with your child's first and last name to be kept at the preschool).

Health

Your child's health is a matter of importance to all of us. This program is in compliance with the Nurse Practice Act and has a nurse consultant that delegates the administration of medications.

Upon enrollment, we ask that you file with us a current health form signed by a physician, a certificate of immunization and a student information and consent form that includes all allergies, chronic illnesses and special health situations.

Sickness

If your child complains of feeling ill at home in the morning, please check symptoms and temperature. If your child is truly sick, please do not send him or her to school. We have neither a full-time health aide, nor space in our clinic to care for sick children. In the event that your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you to take them home during the school day. For the health and wellbeing of other students and staff, students are not admitted back to class unless the child is fever and vomit free for 24 hours without medication.

Additional guidelines are provided in Appendix B.

See also Appendix C special procedures in place temporarily for COVID-19 concerns.

Illness Notification

Please call the office if your child is staying home for the day. If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will notify parents to pick up the child. For the safety and wellness of the other children, we will bring the student to the main office until parents arrive.

For the safety of other children and families, please let the Director or the school office know if your child contracts a communicable disease (chicken pox, strep, influenza, etc.). A notice of exposure needs to be sent to other parents and we are responsible to report clusters of illness to the health department for help in identifying epidemics.

Medication

It is recommended that medications be given at home. If medications are to be given while your child is attending school, there are forms that must be completed by you and your physician (see Director or school nurse for those forms when necessary). Medications need to be provided in the original container and not expired. Prescription medications need to have a current pharmacy label attached. Medications will be stored according to the prescriber, the medication administration manual and the state.

Certain staff may administer medications and have had state approved training and delegation by the Nurse Consultant. This is in compliance with the Delegatory Clause of the Nurse Practice Act (Section 12-38-132-C.R.S.).

If your child has any allergies, emergency medication, special medical needs or even specific lotions or lip balms, please consult with the Director to ensure proper care. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY TYPE OF MEDICATION IN YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK.

Allergies

We are an allergy-aware program but cannot guarantee an allergy-free environment. For the safety of children who have allergies, please refrain from providing nuts or items that contain nuts in your child's snack or lunch. Please let us know if your child has significant food or drink allergies so that we can avoid those items in our classroom. An allergy list will be posted in the classroom to alert the staff to the allergies regularly.

Accidental Injuries

All accidents and injuries that have occurred at the preschool will be reported to the parents, school office and regulating authorities as needed. All staff members are required to have First Aid and CPR training. Minor injuries will be treated with first aid and TLC by a trained staff member. Parents will be notified at the end of the day (for scrapes and scratches) with an Accident Report Form. If we fail to mention something you notice at home, please contact us for clarification if needed. If a child falls or hits his head, parents will be notified immediately as a precaution, and proper care given. If the injury poses an emergency, the paramedics will be called. Every attempt to contact the parents will be made as well.

Please notify the Director if the child was taken to the doctor or dentist following an accident at school.

Immunizations

All families with children enrolled in the preschool must submit a current record of immunization issued from a physician, a statement of exemption or an in-process letter annually. Please note that non-immunized and under-immunized children may be enrolled in the program. Non-immunized and under-immunized children may be excluded from school in the case of a communicable disease outbreak.

Immunization requirements and schedule chart is included in Appendix C.

Infectious Diseases

All staff is trained in the use of Standard Precautions for infectious diseases and bloodborne pathogens. For all incidents when a staff member comes in contact with bodily fluids, the staff will use gloves and clean up with a disinfectant. The children will be taught how to use Standard Precautions for their own safety as well as others (use gloves when picking up foreign materials, wash hands after sneezing, etc).

Child Supervision

Children attending St. Mary Preschool are supervised by a qualified adult at all times. Attendance is kept and children's absences noted. Children are counted frequently during the day, especially when exiting and entering the classroom, before and after outdoor time and for special programs. When going outside the classroom, one adult leads while the other follows the last child out. Headcount is recorded a minimum of twice a day. Should a special activity be planned at St. Mary Preschool, staff will remain with the children while they attend the activity.

Lost Child

In the event of a child missing from our count:

- The teachers will recount and look in the surrounding area for the child, confirming that the child is missing.
- One teacher will stay with the children while the other teacher retraces steps, notifies the office by radio and alerts the Director.
- The Director will notify other staff throughout the building as the search widens. All other staff will confirm their head counts to make sure the missing child isn't with another group.
- The Director and all available staff search in and outside the building for 10 minutes.
- If the child is not located within 10 minutes, the Director will call 911 and the parents.
- The lost child incident will be reported to the Colorado Office of Early Childhood.

Emergency Procedures

Please reference emergency procedures, evacuations, outages and drills outlined in the St. Mary Catholic School Handbook.

Evacuations

The facility will be evacuated in case of a fire, water pipe break, electrical problem or any other situation that could pose a threat to the staff and children. We practice the following drills monthly and at varying times in the day to ensure our staff understands the procedures:

Fire/tornado

The preschool has two exits in the event of a fire or explosion. The children are trained and practiced in performing fire drills monthly and at varying times in the day.

Shelter in Place

Any situation where children and staff will be safer to remain in the building. Some examples are tornados, severe weather, power outage, loose animal or fires in the area. Students will be kept in an inner room, away from windows and doors until an "all-clear" has been given by the teacher or Director.

Power Outage

If a power outage occurs, the power company will be contacted and an estimated duration of the outage determined. If the power company estimates a long period of time before power can be restored, the Director will determine if the children can safely remain at the preschool or if parents should be contacted. Some deciding factors include, temperature, lighting to safely supervise children and warm water to meet requirements for hand washing. If the Director and Principal determine that it is not safe, parents will be contacted. If the building is determined to be unsafe, the staff and children will be evacuated to an off-site location.

Lockdown

Any situation where there is a dangerous external threat (active shooter, disgruntled adult, employee or church visitor, intruder, etc.) In the event of an area lockdown or other threat in the area, the school will be notified. All children and staff will leave playgrounds, hallways and bathrooms immediately until further instruction.

Off-site evacuation

If the school administration feels that it is safer to move the children and staff to an off-site shelter, the children and staff will exit the building quietly and immediately. The church office and emergency responders will be notified of the evacuation. We will walk the children to:

Macintosh Academy
7018 S Prince St
Littleton CO 80120

Reunification with Families

When all children are safely gathered in an off-site holding area, a name and face attendance is taken. Parents will be notified of the location. Students will be signed out by an authorized adult with identification. No child will be released to an unknown adult or an adult that is not on the authorized pick up list for that child.

Parking Lot and Playground Safety

Please drive SLOWLY in the parking lot! Park in indicated spaces and be very cautious backing up. We recommend that children are walked to and from the building holding hands with an adult. Do not leave an unattended child in a car for any length of time. If you have a sleeping sibling, text a teacher or call the office to alert us and we will bring your child to you.

Security

We take the security of your children very seriously. Entrances to the building are locked and some are monitored by cameras during the day. Our north entrance into the preschool will be unlocked for 10 minutes before and after pick up and drop off times. All other times that you need to retrieve your child, you will need to enter into the main school office where they will call us to bring you your child if necessary.

In addition, you will sign your child in and out of the building each day. You will let us know who is authorized to pick up your child as well. Please alert others that are on your authorized pick up list that we will ask for identification if we do not recognize them.

Please see the Emergency Procedures section of this or the St. Mary Catholic School Handbook for more information on our safety policies.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

The preschool's staff makes every attempt to discipline and guide children with love, dignity and respect. The term guidance is used for several reasons. It is a positive term and implies working with the child to develop internal control of his/her behavior. Discipline is teaching. We teach the techniques necessary to understand how we are feeling and how to handle this situation and those to come.

We begin our guidance by setting up the environment in a safe and inviting way that engages learning and discourages inappropriate behavior. Using logical rules, schedules and routines, our students learn control of their behavior and choices. Positive behavior support, positive reminders and redirection help us to encourage good behavior. Finally, we offer "time in" instead of "time out." Time out is a great way to learn to stop a specific behavior at home, but in a school setting, it is exclusive and doesn't encourage learning what to do in the situation. Time in is a way for us to remove the child from a situation, observe how others are handling the situation and return for another try after calming down. We teach not to say, "I'm sorry" (developmentally not understood at this age) but how to ask what we can do about it to make the person feel better, a path toward empathy and respect for others.

Our goal is to encourage children to become creative, independent, responsible and socially mature humans. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences for those choices.

Any ongoing situations will be discussed with parents to ensure a cooperative approach. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns at any time.

NOTE: NO corporal punishment will be allowed. This is defined as the use of negative physical touching (spanking, slapping, pinching, etc). No verbal abuse will be allowed such as humiliation, ridicule, threat or coercion.

Chronic Disruptive Behavior

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties in preschool.

We are here to serve and protect all of our children. Children demonstrating chronic behavior that has been determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well-being of another child may require the following actions:

- Initial consultation. The Director may require the parents of any child who attends the preschool to meet for a conference. The problem will be defined on paper. Goals will be established, and the parent and teachers will be involved in creating approaches toward solving the problem
- Second consultation. If the initial plan of helping the child fails, we will meet again, with the assistance of consultants or other professionals that may be able to help with the situation. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, outline new approaches to the problem and discuss the consequences if progress is not apparent.
- Suspension/Expulsion. While we do everything within our capacity to guide your child to success, the Director may immediately suspend a child at any time he/she exhibits a behavior that is harmful to him/herself or others until a solution can be found. A parent may be called at any time the child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by the preschool staff. Suspension and expulsion are highly discouraged. Every effort by the teachers, consultants and parents are made before deciding together on an alternative arrangement.

Assessments

The staff at St. Mary Catholic Preschool uses a number of assessment strategies as an integral part of our program. Assessments and learning plans help us to understand your child so that we are forming the whole child for Kindergarten success, and beyond.

We use the assessments to support children's learning by planning program improvements and adapting teaching practices in order to meet the individual needs of children. We use a variety of methods such as observations, checklists, rating scales and individually administered screening tools (ASQ3 and ASQ-SE). Our assessment plan includes the following:

Ages and Stages and Ages and Stages - Social Emotional

These standardized developmental screening tools are a first step at looking closely at each child's growth, learning and development. Developmental screenings provide valuable insight about a child's cognitive, motor, communication and social-emotional development to determine if a child is learning basic skills. Screenings are helpful because they identify children's current understanding of concepts and assist in helping our teachers build an educational baseline from which to begin planning. Screening results can help connect children at risk of developmental delay to community resources and supports for further evaluation or to determine eligibility for services.

Screenings will occur two weeks after the beginning of the school year, and in February.

Results will be shared with families and remain confidential. If your child is in need of additional evaluation, we will work with your family to ensure that you are connected to the appropriate resource within the community based on the age of your child, your child's needs and the county or school district in which your family resides.

Individual Learning Plan

From the first day of school, teachers will be assessing children and understanding who they are, how they learn, what they know and what skills they need for growth. This learning plan helps us to get to know your child and illustrates growth throughout the year. We receive some of the information for this learning plan from the profile the parents complete at the beginning of the school year.

Progress Reports

Twice a year, skill reports are compiled based on the observations and records we have accumulated each day. These reports are shared at conferences and show growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The final progress report is delivered to parents at the end of the school year with suggestions of activities to work on during the summer to continue growth.

Conferences

Two times a year we participate in student-led conferences (October and February). These conferences are a chance for your child to show you what he does at school and share skills you may not have seen at home! The conference in October is also a chance for parents to speak with teachers about any concerns or goals they may have for the year. The spring conference is a chance to share the developmental screening results as well as the progress being made by the student.

Portfolios

Documentation of all children's developmental growth and progress is collected across the full range of children's experiences. Samples of children's work (including photos, writing, cutting, creative art, physical growth and personal interests) will reflect growth in a sequential timeline.

The portfolios are given to parents during the last quarter of preschool and can be reviewed upon request at any time during the school year.

Speech, Vision, Hearing and Language

In the spring we also conduct physical screenings to check vision and hearing. At this time, we also have Children's Advisory Network conduct speech and language testing to get a jump on assistance during the summer before the school year begins.

Operating Policies

Parking

Parents of preschool students may park in the north parking lot located to the north of the preschool entrance. For the safety of all children attending St. Mary Catholic School, please park in designated spaces and not in fire lanes (red painted curbs).

Arrivals and Departures

The outer doors will unlock for 10 minutes surrounding drop off and pick up times during the day. Any other times, please bring your child to the school's main office doors. Once inside, please ensure that your child is getting prepared for class by putting away her backpack and coat and washing her hands. As a reminder, if you have not applied sunscreen, please let the teacher know.

Signing In or Out

Students may only be dropped off and picked up by an adult 18 years or older. It is also important not to leave your child(ren) unattended in the classroom, playground, car or building.

This includes children that are with you that might be sleeping in the car! If you need to have us help you by bringing your child out, we are happy to help (call the Director's cell phone or leave a message and if we can come out, we will!).

Using your full signature, please sign your child in or out on the sign in sheet. Also, leave a phone number that you can be reached in case we need to get a hold of you during the day.

Authorized Pick Up

If an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child, the child will not be allowed to leave. If an unidentified, but authorized, adult attempts to pick up a child, identification will be required. If we have a question about who is picking up your child (or if the person is not on your list) we will contact either parent for permission to release the child. Authorization must be given in writing. If on any given day your child has permission to leave school with someone other than those authorized to pick up, please advise the teacher, director or school office in writing.

The preschool cannot legally deny release of any child to a parent or guardian unless we have a written court order. The staff will not allow a child to leave with any person we suspect to be inebriated, under the influence of any legal, illegal or prescriptive substance that we believe could interfere with the safety of the child or in possession of a weapon- even a parent.

If you wish to change the names of persons who are authorized to pick up your child, you must do so in writing so that we have the information on file.

In the event that a child is not picked up at the close of day, the remaining staff will attempt to reach the parents at work or at home. If this is unsuccessful, we will then attempt to call emergency contacts. At no time is your child left unattended.

Every classroom will be checked at the end of the day to ensure that all children have been picked up and have left the building with their parents or guardians. The sign in sheets will be kept as a record of who picked up and the time.

Arriving Late

A child and their accompanying adult who arrive late must check in at the front office of St. Mary Catholic School. The adult will then need to walk the child down to the preschool classroom to sign in. If class is away from the classroom or school, the Director will be contacted by the office to unite the child with the class.

Field Trips

Our curriculum includes opportunities for children to participate in field trips. Notices of all field trips will be posted on teachers' bulletin boards and on Sycamore and in email before a trip is taken.

Most of our field trips are walking field trips. If transportation is required, the transportation is provided by volunteer parents who must complete all forms required to volunteer at the school (see office staff for requirements). Proof of insurance and a valid driver's license are checked before the trip. Written parental permission is required for excursions outside of the school grounds. Seat belts with a five-point harness are always used, as well as car seats compliant with the Seat Belt Safety regulations. Children must sit in the backseat of a car when passenger airbags are present. Parents may decline to allow their child to participate in a field trip for personal reasons. Please avoid bringing siblings on field trips.

Personal Belongings

All children are provided with a cubby in their classroom to store school papers and personal possessions. We recommend that children not bring personal toys or other valuables, including jewelry and money to school. This avoids much heartbreak when items become lost or broken! "Sharing time" is, of course, an exception, however, items will be immediately returned to cubbies to avoid a problem.

What to wear to school

Uniforms are not required but are especially encouraged when we attend Mass. Casual uniforms (polo shirt and dark pants or skirts) are welcome any day. Simple clothing is most appropriate otherwise. Although we try to use washable paints and markers, there are times when your child's clothing will get messy. Please send your child in clothing that you are not too concerned about getting well used. Whenever possible, provide clothing with fastenings your child can manipulate. Sturdy shoes are especially important for the playground (as opposed to jellies, sandals and flip flops). All outer garments, including hats and boots, should be labeled with your child's name. Children should be properly dressed for all weather conditions.

Snack and Meal Guidelines

We are an allergy-aware program. Please be considerate of our students with allergies by avoiding packing foods with nuts or foods that may contain nuts.

For snack time (mid-morning), send a small, healthy snack and bottle filled with water each school day. Snacks need to meet the childcare meal pattern for snacks outlined by the United

States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Two food groups are recommended per snack, and at least three for lunch. See chart in Appendix D.

An example of a healthy snack includes hummus and pretzels or veggies, fruit and dry cereal or cheese, or meat slices and crackers. All snacks should be ready to eat and take less than 10 minutes to consume. Please do not send cookies, candies, juices or other high sugar snacks such as gummy fruit snacks.

Also, we do not have room for refrigeration so please utilize ice packs to keep the food safe, pack a spoon or fork if necessary, and include a napkin so that we can reinforce manners at the table!

Lunches need to be healthy as well and include at least three food groups. Please avoid sending too many treats, juices or salty snack items. Milk can be purchased through the school milk program, as well as a healthy “hot” lunch. Michael’s of Denver, an independent school food service caters our school lunch program. Lunch orders are made online at michaels.hi.hotlunchonline.net. More information on how to order the milk or hot lunches is available in the school office.

Food items that are not considered safe for children younger than 4 years old include: hot dogs, whole or sliced in rounds, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas and hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. If your child has trouble swallowing foods at home, please cut the foods lengthwise into pieces that children can swallow safely. Thank you for your assistance with this.

Rest time

State regulations require a minimum of 30-minute rest time for preschoolers. Rest time begins at 1pm. Each child rests on a mat or cot in their classrooms. The room is darkened, and soft music turned on. Children staying for the afternoon should bring a sheet and small blanket. A small cuddle toy is also welcome. If, after the 30 minutes, your child does not sleep, we will offer quiet table-top activities until the rest of the group wakes. We do not wake students but allow for a little over an hour to sleep before we turn on lights and move to other activities for the afternoon.

Potty Training

While we understand that children will have accidents at this age, or may even require a little help with buttons or zippers, we do not have diaper or pull up changing capabilities at St. Mary Catholic Preschool. We will encourage many breaks during the day as well. Please be sure to have a complete set of extra clothes (including socks) in your child’s bag so that we can use them if needed.

Visitor and Volunteer Policy

Visitors are always welcome at St. Mary Catholic Preschool. Please complete proper credentials in the school office to be able to come to our classroom. We often ask for someone to come for a special project we might be working on, but we also like to have families help with our library, play games, cook or read books with us, too. Please schedule a time that works for you with your teacher. All visitors must sign in at the school office and wear a visitor sticker in the building.

Fundraising and Outreach

We are a non-profit ministry of the church so our resources are stretched thin. From time to time we will have fundraisers as a school, as well as outreach opportunities to help those in our community. We appreciate your understanding and participation!

Parent-School Communication

We try to keep all families informed of what is going on at the school, in the preschool and even in the community.

- Outside of each classroom, we try to post our daily and weekly news. We also have our lesson plans out so that you can see what we are working on in the classroom for discussions or enrichment at home. There is also a preschool bulletin board just inside the doors that has community events, our curriculum guide for the year and other important announcements.
- Each teacher tries to send a pass-a-note through Sycamore each week, or more often if necessary, to relay information to families. This is the best way for you to send information to your teachers as well - let us know your child is not coming in that day, question about something they have told you, respond to a note sent to you. You can set Sycamore up to get sent to your email or check it through the app.
- Monthly news is sent either through email or Sycamore so that you know what is coming up in the preschool and to give you more details about something on the calendar. We will also post these messages on our bulletin board.
- Occasionally, we will send papers home that needs your attention. These will be located in your child's mailbox outside of your classroom.
- The website offers information about the preschool and will be updated periodically as well.
- Follow St. Mary Catholic School's Facebook page!

Calendar

A calendar of school events includes many of the preschool events and dates that preschool is included in school wide functions. Dates of activities are subject to change.

Television and Video Viewing

Television shows and videos are not typically used in our preschool curriculum. The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. We encourage and provide an environment where children can be active and creative explorers. We do watch supplemental non-fiction clips that are part of our Scholastic and National Geographic Science curriculum or a song video for movement or math. Otherwise, when a video is to be shown during preschool hours, we will inform parents in advance of the title and when it will be shown.

Photographs and Videos

The teachers will take pictures of children participating in activities throughout the year. These pictures will be used in projects, hung in displays in the hallways and used for end of the year portfolios. No photographs of children will be posted on our website or social media without your permission. Please see permission to publish form in your summer/welcome packet.

Interpreters

If a parent is in need of an interpreter to communicate with St. Mary Catholic Preschool staff, parents are welcome to have someone assist in any conversation or bring someone to any preschool function.

Classroom Pets

In order to respect those with allergies, and due to state regulations on animals and reptiles, we will not have a classroom pet on a regular basis. Pets may be brought in by parents for sharing. After sharing, the pet needs to be taken home.

Birthdays

We celebrate your child's birthday throughout the day with special books, parades, music and fun, so we ask that you refrain from celebrating with food at school. If you would like to distribute something at the end of the day for children to take home (goodie bags, bubbles, etc) or provide a special game or story to share for the day, let your teacher know and she will incorporate the activity into your child's special day.

If you are planning a birthday party away from the classroom and the whole class is not invited, please mail the invitations (as well as any thank you notes) using the school directory.

Assessments

Transition to Kindergarten

Assessments are conducted continually during the school year to ensure objectives are met that help students be successful kindergarteners. Teachers are available to discuss the criteria necessary for Kindergarten at St. Mary's at any time, or you are welcome to talk with the Kindergarten teachers at any time.

Continuity of Care

Students are assigned to preschool classes based on the age he/she will be when attending Kindergarten. In Colorado, the age for Kindergarten is 5 years old on or before October 1st. We have designed the classrooms to be a progression so that having two or three years in preschool will benefit each child individually and ensure Kindergarten readiness. Students stay in the classroom they are assigned throughout the school year, August to May.

Grievances and Conflict Resolution

If you as a parent has a grievance, please go directly to the person(s) involved. Dealing directly with the people involved helps to keep rumors from spreading and keeps our community strengthened in faith and healthy. If the grievance involves a teacher, the parent needs to present the situation directly to the teacher. Failing to reach a settlement with the teacher, the parent may then present the situation to the Director, and then, if still not resolved, to the Principal for help in resolving the situation. If the conflict is still not resolved, refer to the St. Mary Catholic School handbook for additional steps. Changes can only be made, and problems resolved when all parties concerned are in direct communication.

Reporting Suspected Licensing Violations

In the event that a parent or guardian suspects that there is a violation of child care licensing rules, the concern should be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Office of Early Childhood.

1575 Sherman St
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-5948

Child Abuse and Neglect

Each member of the preschool staff is considered mandatory reporters and are required to report any suspected signs of child abuse or neglect.

Schedule Changes and Withdrawal Policy

We try to stay as flexible for your schedule as possible. We will not be able to accommodate schedule changes if the ratios within the classroom exceed a safe level. If you need to change your schedule or add days to your schedule on a regular basis, please notify the Director and school office. If you need an exception for a particular day, check with your child's teachers first to see if there is room to make arrangements for you.

Withdrawals

If a child needs to be withdrawn from our program, please give a minimum of two weeks notice by completing a Notice of Withdrawal through the main school office. Tuition will be recalculated and adjusted on actual attendance and you will be notified of any balance due.

Discharge Policy

St. Mary Catholic Preschool reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for the following reasons:

- Non-payment or excessive late payments of tuition and fees.
- Not observing the rules of the Preschool as outlined in the Parent Handbook agreement.
- Physical and/or verbal abuse of a staff member or child by a parent or a child.
- Child has special needs that cannot adequately be met in our setting.

Concerns, Questions, Suggestions

We are here to meet the needs of each child and their family to the best of our ability. The partnerships we create make a faith-filled community that thrives and spreads our good news for miles and generations. Please bring any comments, concerns, questions or suggestions to the Director. Parents may also address concerns with their child's teacher.

Our Prayers

We are praying that this year, with all of us working together, we will be able to develop your child beyond your expectations and far beyond their potential - Spiritually, Emotionally, Socially and Academically.

St. Mary, Pray for us.

Changes to Parent Handbook policies due to COVID-19 concerns:

Child Drop Off and Pick Up

- We will have staggered drop offs and pick-ups with social distancing regulations in place. Pens for sign in will be used once and dropped in a bucket for sanitizing. Families will arrange start time and pick up time with the classroom teacher, who will ensure times are staggered, or they will stay in their cars for drop off. Pick up will be outside as usual, by car. During the summer months, please come to the Holy Family Door.
- Drop offs and pick ups will be outside the door. Parents should not come into the building as much as possible. When one parent enters with the child, masks will be required, and social distancing practices maintained.

Screening Children Upon Arrival, CDC regulations

- Persons who have a fever of 100.4⁰ (38.0⁰C) or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted. We will encourage parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick. We will screen children upon arrival, as follows:
- Ask parents/guardians to take their child's temperature either before coming to the facility or upon arrival at the facility. We will have an infrared thermometer available. Upon their arrival, we will stand at least 6 feet away from the parent/guardian and child and ask the parent/guardian to confirm that the child does not have fever, shortness of breath or a cough.
- We will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, or extreme fussiness.
- For now, staff members will greet the child at the door; and, immediately take the child to the restroom to wash hands before entering the classroom. Staff will practice social distancing as much as possible in the hallway. A staff member will clean each toilet after use.
- Lending library books – books will be wiped down and will be returned to the shelf after 3 days.
- Hallway activities, if available, will be limited to quick, non-contact activities like hop-scotch, arm circles, etc. Any common areas used will be disinfected before another group enters the area.

Classroom Restrictions

- Classroom sizes will be restricted to 10 students. This does not include staff.
- Students will remain with their teacher as much as possible during the day, including outside time.
- As always, we require handwashing upon arrival and enable handwashing throughout the day. We will also be limiting the toys in use to those that are easily cleanable, non-porous, with smooth surfaces and **eliminating** soft, fabric toys, dress-up clothing, sensory tables and water play. Students may not bring items from home at this time.
- Teachers will clean and disinfect each classroom at least at the end of the day. Cleaning crews will deep clean bathrooms, drinking fountains, sinks, floors, railings, doorknobs and switches each evening.
- Students may not intermingle with other classes.
- Snacks and lunches will be provided by families.
- Social Distancing Requirements will be maintained as much as possible which requires students within a classroom and outdoors to maintain a 6 foot distance.

Volunteer Requirements and Training

- Until further notice, volunteers will not be allowed in the building. No special educators will be allowed for the summer program at this time (5/12/20)
- Temperature checks will be required. Employees and volunteers should stay at home if they are not feeling well.
- Masks will be worn at all times, including through the parking lot while entering and exiting the building.
- We must adhere to social distancing guidelines as much as possible.

Who should wear a mask or face cover while in the facility?

“Although CDC recommends that children under 2 should not wear a facemask, the child care environment poses unique challenges since groups of up to 10 young children may be supervised by one caregiver for several hours at a time. For that reason, our recommendation is that children under the age of 3 within the child care should not wear masks and no child should wear a mask while napping. Additionally, children between the age of 3 and 5 should be supervised if they are wearing a mask. If the mask is creating discomfort or resulting in the child touching their face frequently, reconsider whether a mask is appropriate for that child. Parents dropping off and picking up children should be asked to wear masks while they are at the facility. Masks are recommended for everyone in the facility three and older but are not required.” CDPHE 4.14.20

Student Sickness, Extended Absence Policy Revision (5/12/20)

- Any student running a fever of 100.4 (medication free) will be sent home and **not allowed to return to school for 72 hours.**
- All students attending school must be fever free (medication free) **for 72 hours.**

Procedure for when there is a suspected case of COVID 19:

Note that Amended Executive Order D 2020 035 has changed the minimum time period a child care facility must close if there is a positive or suspected case of COVID-19 in a student, parent of a student, or staff member at the facility from 72 hours to **24 hours**. During this closure a facility should conduct a thorough cleaning as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).