

MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Mary's Elementary School is a Catholic PreK-8 school that strives to develop the academic and spiritual potential of each child in a loving, safe, faith community.

Our goal is to provide a quality Catholic education that reveals Christ. Our students are encouraged to live a life of service for God and humankind, guided by the principles of peace and justice.

PHILOSOPHY

Providing children with a safe, loving and spiritual environment is our primary goal at St. Mary's Preschool. Respecting a child's individuality and helping them to feel and be successful is important in fostering their self-esteem and independence. We provide children with developmentally appropriate activities and experiences. Through these activities and experiences we encourage them to live a life of service for God and one another.

DISCIPLINE

Our discipline or child guidance policy is to help the child learn "appropriate" ways to handle anger, disappointment, frustration, hurt, etc. We encourage talking calmly to express our needs and feelings. We redirect whenever possible and practice conflict resolution skills. Our goal is to let children know it's okay to make mistakes and to stress the importance of learning from that experience. No child will be humiliated, embarrassed, or ridiculed. Children need to feel safe, "save face", and feel loved. We let them know that while the behavior is unacceptable and that we are disappointed in inappropriate behavior, we still care about them.

However, if inappropriate behavioral patterns occur, parents are notified and asked to work with teachers in helping their child to engage in more appropriate behaviors. A child who continues to display inappropriate behaviors may need specialized help that we, at St. Mary's may be unable to provide.

ADMISSION POLICY

St. Mary's Preschool is available to all children regardless of religion, race, color or creed. To be eligible, your child must be 4 years of age by August 1st. We welcome all students. The principal will meet with the parents of all new students to explain our school's Mission Statement and to request a commitment on the part of the parents/guardians to support the philosophy of Catholic education.

When St. Mary's Preschool cannot accommodate all those who apply for admission, they are placed on a waiting list and taken in the order in which they apply for admission.

Diocesan Policy 5330 states that students diagnosed with learning disabilities will not be denied enrollment in a Catholic school solely on the basis of their disability.

Prior to enrollment, parents of a learning disabled student must present to the school administration accurate information concerning the student's disability including health records, individual educational plans, and all relevant physicians' reports. The information will be used to determine the ability of the school to modify the regular program to meet the needs of the child.

If a child enrolled in a Catholic school is diagnosed with a learning disability, the administration and teachers will work together to determine whether or not the program can be modified to meet the student's needs. If the regular program cannot be modified to meet the needs of the learning disabled student, the school will offer guidance to the family in locating alternative services for the student.

In order to assure that St. Mary's Preschool is the proper placement for children, all students are accepted on a three month probationary basis.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a vital part of a successful preschool program and creating a supportive partnership with parents and families is crucial.

St. Mary's strives to be sensitive to the needs of the families enrolled. Please share information with staff that will assist us in the endeavor (i.e. ethnic history, home language, culture and family structure).

Please check your child's Communication Folder daily for any correspondence: classroom happenings, upcoming events or any other pertinent information will be placed in this folder. The folder will go back and forth from school to home daily. We will check the folder upon arrival for parent notes.

FOOD/MEALS

Students need to bring a snack from home for morning snack time in a labeled brown paper bag. The Preschool will provide 100% juice to be served with morning snack. All Preschool children need to bring a cold lunch. Snack and lunch are eaten in the PreK classroom. When sending in food items from home, including snack, lunch, for holidays and or special occasions, please be conscious of food allergies in the classroom.

CLOTHING

Uniforms are not required. Dress children for PLAY! Clothes should be comfortable, easily manipulated by your child and ready to get “dirty”. Please label all clothing and other personal items. Students do not need to bring in an extra set of clothing; the preschool has extra sets of clothing if needed.

NAPTIME

Please make sure your child has a labeled, beach sized towel for rest. One small stuffed animal/toy may be kept at school. The towel should be taken home every two weeks to be laundered. Please return them in a labeled bag. Naptime will be approximately 45 minutes. Children will not be required to sleep.

ARRIVAL

Drop off time for the Pre K class is 7:50 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Please bring your child to the back door of the Preschool building (yellow house). Parents need to walk their child into the classroom. All students need to be in the classroom by 8:00 am. If your child is going to be arriving after 8:00 a.m. due to an appointment, please call the office (568-2388). The Preschoolers’ “work” day begins by 8:15 a.m. The latest your child may arrive to stay is 9:00 a.m.

DISMISSAL

Children are dismissed promptly at 2:00 p.m. Preschool children will be dismissed at the playground weather permitting. Otherwise dismissal is from their classroom. Children that are not part of the Afterschool Program will be walked over the main office of St Mary’s Elementary School if not picked up by 2:05 pm.

Any child leaving school early or leaving with someone other than the regular “pick-up” person must report to the elementary school office. Please note: If your child is to be picked up early for an appointment, we will consider that child dismissed and should not be returned to school as it is disruptive to the daily schedule.

AFTERSCHOOL CARE

The Afterschool Program is available to preschool children who are registered for the program. Children will stay at the Preschool from 2:00- 3:30 pm each day with a member of the staff of the Afterschool Program. Anytime after 3:30 pm your child will be at the Elementary School building. The Afterschool Program runs until 5:30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

If a child is absent due to a contagious disease the elementary school office should be notified. We respectfully request that you keep your child home if he/she has a temperature, is vomiting, has diarrhea, a runny nose or a productive cough. If a child falls ill at school we will contact the parents or designated adult and the child will be sent home. Please call the office by 9:00 a.m. if your child will be absent.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBERS

It is very important, for emergency and administrative purposes, that every student maintain an up-to date address/phone record at the school office. Notify the school immediately if there is a change of address, home and/or work phone numbers during the school year.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In case of an emergency, each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

1. Parent(s) or guardian(s) name
2. Complete and up-to-date address
3. Home phone and parent(s) or guardian(s) work phone
4. Emergency phone number of friend or relative
5. Physician's name and phone number
6. Name of the hospital the child should be taken to in an emergency
7. Medical alert information
8. Insurance Information

At the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians are required to complete an Emergency Procedure Card for each child.

In the event that an emergency warrants an early school closing children should be prepared with an emergency plan-a form to be filled out and kept in the office.

EVACUATION/CRISIS PLAN

Please see attached: "Family Guide to School Safety"

INCLEMENT WEATHER

School closings or delays are determined by the Westfield School Department. The decision to close or delay school is made by 5:30a.m. Parents are advised to listen to local television or radio stations for the information. Other information concerning closings, delays or early dismissals from WPS will be distributed to families in October or November.

SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

St. Mary's Preschool begins the first full week of September and ends the second full week of June. The Pre K follows the school year calendar established for the Westfield Public Schools. An Academic Calendar is also sent at the beginning of the year. This calendar lists all vacations, In-service days, holidays and Holy Days.

TRANSPORTATION

St. Mary's does not provide transportation for its preschool children.

VISITORS

ALL visitors to the preschool are required to sign the Preschool visitor's log. The Diocese of Springfield now requires all adults who interact with St. Mary's Preschool students, in any way i.e. chaperones, library aides etc., to have a CORI check. You may check with our Administrative Assistant at the elementary school about your CORI check.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are scheduled by the classroom teacher at various times throughout the school year. These trips are designed to supplement various aspects of the classroom curriculum. Parents will receive notices of field trips well in advance of the scheduled trip date, and will be asked to sign field trip permission forms. Students will not be able to attend without the signed accepted form. All preschool field trips require the help of chaperones. All chaperones are required to sign the Diocesan Code of Conduct, have a CORI check and submit a copy of your driver's license.

TUITION

The tuition at St. Mary's is set by the pastor and school board during the school year for the following year. The parents/guardians will have a choice of how to make their tuition payments to the school. The school will not be responsible for loss of placement if forms are not returned in a timely manner.

Payments may be made in one of three ways: one payment, two payments by August 15th and January 15th or ten monthly payments due on the 15th of each month. If payment is not received by the 20th of the month, it is considered late.

HEALTH

A. Medication

Diocesan Policy 5513 states that school personnel are never permitted to administer medication except in cases of emergency when it will be administered by persons trained for this specific purpose. If a school nurse is not available, the parents/guardian or adult designated by them must come to school to administer medication. Parents/legal guardians are encouraged to work out a schedule whereby medication is administered before or after the school day. If medication is mandatory during school hours, the following steps must be in place

1. Written orders from the student's doctor.
2. Written request/authorization from the student's parents
3. Medication, in a pharmacy labeled container, should be delivered to school by a responsible adult. One week's supply should be brought to the Preschool each Monday. The bottle of medicine shall be issued by a pharmacist; the label shall have:

1. The name of the student.
2. The name of the doctor.
3. The name and strength of the medication.
4. The amount of each dose.
5. The schedule for the administration of the medication.

St. Mary's Elementary School provides qualified nursing daily for our students. Our registered nurse works from 9-1 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. (Wednesdays in the High School)

When the school receives medication for a student two forms need to be completed. They are as follows: *Medication Administration and Emergency Care Plan Form* and *Parental consent and Medication Order Form*.

Diocesan policy 5510 states that each school shall comply with local Board of Health and Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulation regarding immunization, communicable diseases, administering medications and physical examinations.

B. Immunizations

Diocesan policy 5510.1 is as follows: State law requires immunization against Hepatitis B, varicella, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio. Children must also be tested for the presence of lead. Parents are required to present certification of immunization when they register children in school for the first time.

A student shall be admitted to school without required immunizations upon certification by a doctor, who has personally examined the student, that the student's health would be endangered by any of the immunization series. Such certification shall be submitted at the beginning of each school year to the health authorities in charge of the school health program.

C. Illness/injury

In case of illness or injury, a child will be cared for temporarily by a member of the school staff. Basic first-aid treatment will be rendered. If emergency treatment is necessary, parent/guardian will be contacted. If a parent/guardian or other designated person is not available, the child will be taken to the emergency room. The faculty and staff of St. Mary's are First Aid and CPR certified.

PROGRESS REPORT/CONFERENCES

Progress Reports will be completed three times per year—December, March and June. Parent-Teacher Conferences will also be available the second week of October and as needed or requested by the parent or teacher.

PARKING/PARKING LOT GUIDELINES

Parent and Visitor Parking: We have a very limited parking lot, especially when winter comes. The Westfield Police Department demands that all parents and visitors respect the signs for handicapped parking and teacher parking. When you arrive in the morning, please drive in by the back gate of the school yard off Mechanic St. and park in the back of the elementary school Parking Lot behind the orange cones. Then walk your preschooler to the back door of the preschool. When you return to your car, leave the school yard by the back gate facing the Western Auto store on Birge Ave. Some additional parking spaces may be available on the street, but please be aware that Westfield enforces its parking restrictions. PLEASE do not block our front parking lot or fire lanes when dropping off or picking up your child(ren).

We all need to be patient and courteous about the parking lot. Keep in mind safe driving at all times. Thank you.

SCHOOL/PRINCIPAL'S RIGHT TO AMEND

Though this handbook was created with great forethought and care, situations and/or issues will arise that were not anticipated or that for some unanticipated reason our handbook does not delineate. The Principal and/or Administrator is the final recourse for the settling of these instances. The Principal and/or Administrator also reserve the right to amend this handbook for just cause. Parents will be given prompt notification if changes are made.