

# St. Mark's Preschool

## Parent Handbook



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## **Purpose and Goals**

We believe that all growth happens in a sequential and orderly way. All children progress through stages that can be predicted with each child going through them at his/her own individual rate.

We believe that developments of the whole child (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual) must be considered as we provide experiences that will nurture and facilitate growth. As children learn, they're physical, social, and intellectual components are integrated and dependent upon each other.

We want children to:

Develop a positive self-image.

Develop creativity and imagination.

Develop cognitive skills at his/her developmental level.

Develop motor skills (small and large).

Develop language skills (listening and speaking).

Be curious- to wonder- to seek answers.

Learn to get along with others- value own rights and the rights of others.

Learn to work and play independently (away from home) accepting help and direction from other adults.

Learn to function in a group.

Grow in their ability to use acceptable behavior (talk instead of hit; ask for help when frustrated).

## **Program Objectives**

Young children learn differently from an elementary child. Young children learn through play. Our program provides resourceful, creative guidance, adequate space, materials, and equipment using a "hands-on" approach.

Teachers plan experiences and centers that are age appropriate but that take into account individual differences of growth, personality, learning style, and family background. Activities will be planned to allow success for every child. A child who experiences success enjoys learning and take pride in accomplishments- success as an individual, as well as a member of the group.

The curriculum planning for each age level uses a thematic approach related to the immediate environment surrounding the child. Teachers follow the children's lead to expand their learning in a given area. Field trips may be planned to enhance the curriculum.

## **Discipline**

Warm, caring adults regard discipline as teaching or guiding of appropriate behavior rather than punishment. Children need clearly stated expectations, logical consequences, and intervention when behavior becomes out of control.

The staff of St. Mark's Preschool seek to demonstrate positive guidance for the children. Positive guidance includes diverting and redirecting a child's attention when power struggles over toys and territory ensue; giving the children the space and time to reflect on appropriate behavior; and encouraging children to resolve their conflicts through positive planning, negotiation, and discussion of possible solutions. Teachers at St. Mark's Preschool do not use corporal punishment as a form of discipline.

In the event of persistent disruptive or endangering behaviors towards staff or children, the staff member will notify the director of an ongoing problem which warrants further observation. Staff will maintain documentation of their observations of any behavior incident. This will provide valuable information needed to plan a strategy for intervention. The director will be informed of all ongoing documentation. Staff will work with the family to plan for regular communication and strategies for intervention. If necessary, the director and staff will discuss the particular ongoing concern (s) of the child's behavior, make further recommendations to parents for evaluation and/or evaluate the programs ability to meet the needs of a child. If, after a reasonable amount of time, a child cannot adjust or whose behavior consistently disrupts the physical and learning needs of the other children, the parents may be asked to withdraw the child from the preschool program. If at any time the child's behavior becomes physically endangering (biting, kicking or hitting) towards staff members or other children, the parents may be asked to immediately withdraw the child from the preschool program. Every effort will be made to work with each child's individual needs and to effectively communicate with parents regarding a potential problem situation. First priority is to maintain a safe learning environment for staff members and students.

## **Inclusion Policy**

In keeping with our call to minister to all of God's children, St. Mark's Preschool is committed to the philosophy that including children with differing abilities benefit all the children in our school. We are clear, however, that St. Mark's Preschool is not a therapeutic preschool, but an

opportunity for children with disabilities and typically developing children to interact, learn and socialize.

When a child with an identified special need applies for enrollment in the Preschool, the Director carefully interviews the parents for information about the child's developmental strengths and weaknesses. Any relevant past and current records and evaluations of the child by professionals are requested. The child and parent will be invited to join a classroom for a visit, where further observations will take place.

Based on this information and in consultation with the child's prospective teachers when possible, the Director makes a decision to accept the child when the child and our preschool will mutually benefit.

St. Mark's Preschool does not formally evaluate, by means of testing, any child before entrance. The above outlined evaluative process before acceptance is intended to provide enough information to indicate a beneficial match between the school and child.

After enrollment the child is observed closely for a period of two weeks or 8 school days. Teachers, the Director, parents, and professionals working with the child are consulted during this time. It is felt that it is desirable to allow all children this adjustment period except in extreme circumstances. At the end of this period, a determination is again made as to whether the placement is mutually beneficial.

Three possible determinations at the time are:

- The child's presence in the classroom is of mutual benefit;
- St. Mark's Preschool is unable to meet the child's needs;
- There is a need for professional consultation; with the expectation that appropriate intervention will enable the relationship to be mutually beneficial.

If it is determined by consultation between the teachers and the Director that St. Mark's Preschool is unable to meet the child's needs, a conference is set up with parents, and the parents are asked to seek another placement.

If a professional consultation is advised and the parents decline to use these services, and the child is determined not to be functioning well in the classroom setting, then the parents are asked to seek other placement.

If professional intervention is used, the situation is carefully monitored. The decision to continue the child's enrollment is based on:

- The professional advice;
- The behavior of the child;
- The teachers' opinion;
- Parental input;

- The Director's opinion

There are times when a child not identified at admission as having special needs, exhibits such behaviors at some point during the year. At this point, the process outlined above is put into place.

Whenever possible, St. Mark's Preschool will make reasonable adaptations to meet the individual needs of each child. However, safety and successful functioning of the class always has priority over the individual needs of any given child within the outlined policy.

St. Mark's Preschool believes that there is a range of typical, normal, and acceptable abilities, behaviors, and needs of children. We attempt to accommodate as broad a range as possible in the belief that this diversity strengthens and enriches all children, and the adults who work with them.

## **Enrollment Procedures**

### **Registration**

Registration for each school year is held in late January and/or early February of that year. All tuition payments from the previous year must be paid in full before registration will be processed. Class placement is based on a child's age as of August 31. If there is a question as to the placement of a child, the final decision will be left to the discretion of the Director with the help of the classroom teachers. A conference/tour with the Preschool Director prior to enrolling a child is advised. Parents are also encouraged to observe in a classroom before enrolling.

Registration is opened one week prior to opening registration to the general public.

Registration is handled by mail or in person. Information packets are available in late January/ early February, and processed in the following order:

*First Priority:* Children currently enrolled

*Second Priority:* St. Mark's families not currently enrolled, and siblings of children currently enrolled.

*Third Priority:* New families.

A registration fee is due at time of enrollment. Additionally, an initial payment of \$200 will be due by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Both payments are nonrefundable, however the initial payment will be applied towards the total cost of tuition.

### **Tuition**

Parents may choose one of three payment options:

Option #1- By the month.

Option #2- By the semester.

Option #3- Annually (\$50 discount is applied for all tuitions paid in full by Sept 1)

All tuition payments are due on the first of the month. A LATE FEE of \$25 will be added to any tuition payment not received by the 15<sup>th</sup>. *Refusal to pay the late fees will result in child being dismissed from the program.*

Any checks returned because of insufficient funds will result in a \$25 delinquency fee.

Two insufficient fund checks will necessitate future payments be made by certified check or money order.

### **Withdrawals**

Notice of withdrawal shall be submitted in to the Director thirty (30) days prior to the date of withdrawal. There will be no refunds on monthly tuition. If you are unable to give a 30 day notice, you will be responsible for an additional month's tuition.

### **Health and Safety**

Health and safety are matters of great importance. The Preschool requires a health form and immunization record verified by each child's physician annually. Immunizations must be up to date in accordance with the schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

**Parents must inform teachers and the Director in writing of a child's environmental or food allergies.**

#### **Children are required to stay home if any of the following apply:**

- fever within the last 24 hours (at or above 100 orally or 99.5 under the arm);
- vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours;
- profuse nasal discharge;
- severe congestion or frequent cough;
- first 24 hours on antibiotic;
- conjunctivitis or "pink-eye" (cold in one eye)

If a child will not be in attendance due to illness, vacation or for any other reason, please call the preschool office or email the child's teacher. Any absence lasting three or more consecutive school days require a written statement from parent or physician to readmit the child to class. TEACHERS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ADMINISTER MEDICATION.

Families will be provided information verbally in writing about any unusual or type of communicable disease to which their child has been exposed.

Minor injuries at school receive first aid from a staff member. Information about the accident will be shared with the parent(s). In case of serious accidental injury, an immediate effort will be made to contact the parent(s). If parents cannot be reached, the child's physician

may be called; if necessary, an ambulance may also be called. Until the arrival of a parent, the Director or teacher will make decisions about care of the child.

Reasonable precautions are taken to minimize the spread of germs within the Preschool. Use of latex gloves is required for diapering and first aid, along with hand washing afterward. Clorox wipes and Lysol spray are used to disinfect toys and other surfaces. The floors are mopped daily with a bleach and water solution.

### **Allergy Policy**

An Allergy Action Plan, determined by the child's physician, will be kept on file and signs posted in the classroom of each allergic child. If the allergy is severe, parents will be asked to provide an "allergy-free" snack on their snack day.

### **Fire Safety**

Fire drills are conducted monthly. Teachers know the locations of fire extinguishers and alarms, and how to use them. In case of fire, teachers' first responsibility is to get children out of the building.

### **Emergency Evacuation Plans:**

Please see our Emergency Action Plan for detailed descriptions of our emergency evacuation plans. A copy is provided to all new families at the beginning of the school year. If a new copy is needed, please see the Director.

**\*\*Please note that in order for our emergency plan to work well, it is imperative that each of you keep your emergency contact information current with the school. Please let us know in a written form when you have a change of address, home phone, or cellular phone number.**

### **Suspected Child Abuse:**

Staff will follow legal obligations of reporting suspected child abuse to the Talbot County Department of Social Services.

### **Inclement Weather**

In case of inclement weather, the Preschool follows Talbot County Public Schools closing schedule. In case of a delay, preschool will open at 10:00am and dismiss at the regular time.

Early Birds will be offered on most mornings, even if preschool is delayed, beginning at 8am. There is an additional charge of \$5.00 for children dropped off before 9:00am.

If Talbot County Schools are closed due to inclement weather, the Preschool will also be closed. All delays are posted on our private Facebook page, as well as on our website and an email is also sent out.

Please note that Talbot County Schools delay frequently for fog.

## Program Policies

### **Arrival and Pick-Up**

Children will be accompanied into the school for drop off and pick-up by parents/guardians/child care providers. Teachers need to have on file other persons designated to pick up your child, including telephone numbers. Please follow these procedures for bringing and pick-up your child:

1. Please park in the parking lot or along Trippe Ave. If parking along Trippe Ave, please do not block the mailboxes. Please do not park in the drive-thru lane of the parking lot.
2. Parents and children will not be allowed into the building before 8:50am, unless they are going to be staying for Early Birds.
3. Please accompany your child to his/her classroom. For pick-up, please remain outside the classroom door. Children will be released to parents one by one by their teacher.

### **Chapel Class**

Chapel classes are held once a week for all of our students. Chapel is taught by the Lead Pastor of St. Mark's UMC and by the Director of Christian Education. Chapel classes are taught in the church chapel and follow a general Christian Education curriculum.

### **Music Class**

Music classes are held once a week for all of our students. Music is taught by the Preschool music teacher. Dancing, singing and playing instruments are all incorporated into the lessons.

### **Spanish Class**

Spanish classes are taught to our three and four year old students every other week throughout the school year. Classes are designed to introduce students to the Spanish language and culture. Classes focus on teaching basic words and phrases. Spanish classes are contracted through "Little Bilingual" and taught by the company's owner, Ann O'Connor.

### **Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences are held twice a year; once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Teachers will evaluate and gather information on each child's development and learning; both through "formal" assessments and through observation in the classroom. The information gathered is shared with parents and guardians during conferences. Sign-up sheets will be placed outside each classroom door for parents to sign up. Conferences are completely



voluntary. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teachers at any time. Teachers, in turn, contact parents with any special concerns or news. The Director welcomes the opportunity to visit with parents at any time regarding matters that concern parents and children.

### **Field Trips**

Short trips are planned occasionally to visit places pertaining to the curriculum. Parents will be asked to provide transportation to and from the establishment. All field trips are elective. St. Mark's Preschool staff members are not permitted to provide transportation for children.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

Children's birthdays are observed at school on or near the actual birthday. Summer birthdays may be celebrated near the end of the school year. Our celebrations are very simple. Parents may provide a special snack; prior arrangements should be made with teachers. *The preschool does not permit sending home Invitations for birthday celebrations outside of school, unless the entire class is invited.*

### **Security**

Families may visit any area of the preschool facility during the programs operation. For added security, the doors will be locked from 9:30-11:45 each day. If you want to enter the building, please enter through the main doors of the church.

### **Shepherd's Club**

Preschool families, St. Mark's Church members, and other wishing to make a financial contribution to St. Mark's Preschool may do so through the Shepherd's Club. Donations to this fund are available for use by the Preschool to help it provide a superior early childhood education.

## **Everyday Information**

### **Arrival**

Between 8:50am and 9:00am classroom teachers are ready to greet your children and begin the morning. This drop off time provides you with the opportunity to view children's work on display and speak with your child's teacher. We ask you to sign the sign-in sheet daily and make any pertinent notes about emergency contact or change in the person picking up your child at the end of our day.

**\*\*If pick up plans change during the day, please call the office to inform us of a change in pick up person or time.**

## **Snack**

A midmorning snack is served and parents are asked to share this responsibility. Your child's teacher will provide a snack calendar at the beginning of each month. Your child will have a day assigned to them that they are responsible for providing snack for the class. Snack should be sufficient to feed the entire class. Check serving sizes on all packages to make sure there is enough snack. Children will be given water with their snack. Those children enrolled in our Two year old class will be asked to provide a sippy cup of water daily for their child. If parents do not send in snack on their assigned day, or do not provide enough snack, a notice will be sent home for the family to replenish what was used from the Preschool pantry.

## **Early Birds**

The Early Birds program is offered Monday- Thursday and allows parents to bring their children to school early. The program allows children to arrive at 8:00am. The children will be cared for by one of the Preschool teachers or staff members. During this time the children enjoy free play time and/or a craft. The children will be escorted to their regular classrooms when school begins.

The cost of the program is \$5.00 per child per day. You do not need to sign up for this program in advance, however, you must have the "Early Bird" form filled out. You will be billed on your monthly statement for each day your child participates in the program. The program is offered *most* fog/snow delayed days, it will be posted on our Facebook page and website if we will/will not be offering Early Birds that day. There is an additional fee of \$5.00 if drop off is before 9am. After 9am, the normal charge of \$5.00 will apply.

## **Lunch Bunch Kids**

Lunch Bunch Kids will be offered *most* Tuesdays and Wednesdays from Noon-2:00pm, unless otherwise stated. There will be a signup sheet posted on the bulletin board in the hallway. A minimum of 6 children must be signed up to hold lunch bunch and there is a maximum of 12 children per day. Children must provide their own packed lunch. Only those enrolled in our three and four year old programs are eligible to participate. The cost of the program is \$10.00 per child, per day. You will be billed on your monthly statement for each day your child participates.

## **Family Focus**

St. Mark's Preschool recognizes the importance of the family in the development of self-confident children. We respect the values of the home and encourage the child to honor his/her parents. We invite parents to share hobbies, interests, jobs and family traditions with the children at school. The Preschool sponsors family events such as Trunk or Treating, the Christmas Program and our Family Fun Picnic in May.

## **Inclement Weather**

If public schools in Talbot County are closed due to bad weather, St. Mark's Preschool will be closed.

If Talbot County Public Schools are delayed by one hour, two hours or 90 mins, the preschool will open at 10:00am.

If Talbot County Public Schools are delayed by three hours, preschool will be CLOSED.

Early Birds will still be available most delayed mornings; however, please check our website and/or Facebook page for the time (8am or 9am).

Talbot County Schools delay frequently for fog. Please listen to the radio (WCEI radio or watch WBOC to check for delays.)

Delays and Closings are also posted on our website, Facebook page and communicated via email.

## **Clothing**

All children will need a set of clothes (from skin out) that are labeled and placed in a clear zip lock bag. Please check periodically to see that the clothes are appropriate for the season and still fit.

Please send your child to Preschool in play clothes and sturdy shoes, as some of our activities are messy and active. We request tennis shoes daily. Shoes must be worn at all times throughout the school day. Children not wearing the appropriate clothing or shoes may not be allowed to participate in certain activities or play on our playground, due to safety concerns. *Please label all clothing with your child's name or initials.*

## **Open Door Policy**

As always, please feel free to contact your child's teacher and/or the Director should any questions or concerns arise.